

Faces of Charisma

Explorations in Medieval Culture

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Faces of Charisma

*Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the
Medieval West*

Edited by

Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak
Martha Dana Rust



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Brigitte Bedos-Rezak and Martha Rust

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List of Abbreviations

CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis.</i> Turnhout, 1966-
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina.</i> Turnhout, 1953-
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.</i> Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (1864-2012)
DC	District of Columbia
MA	Massachusetts
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
MGH Auct. Ant.	<i>Auctores antiquissimi</i>
MGH Conc.	<i>Concilia</i> , eds. Friedrich Maassen et al. 8 vols. Hanover, 1893-
MGH Fontes iuris	<i>Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , eds. Mario Krammer et al., 16 vols. Hanover, 1909-
MGH Lib. Lit.	<i>Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI. et XII. conscripti</i> , ed. ed. Ernst Dümmler, 3 vols, Hanover, 1891-1897
MGH Poetae	<i>Poetae Latini aevi Carolini</i> , ed. Ernst Dümmler. 4 vols. Berlin, 1881-1923
MGH SS	<i>Scriptores</i>
MGH SS rer. Lang.	<i>Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i> , eds. Georg Waitz et al. Hanover, 1878
MGH SS rer. Germ.	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , eds. Georg Pertz et al. 80 vols. Hanover, 1871-
Mich.	Michigan
NC	North Carolina
NY	New York
PG	Jacques-Paul Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca.</i> Paris, 1857-1866
PL	Jacques-Paul Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina.</i> Paris, 1844-1855
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes.</i> Institut des sources chrétiennes. Les éditions du Cerfs, Paris, 1942-
VT	Vermont

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Faces and Surfaces of Charisma: An Introductory Essay

Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Martha D. Rust

The idea for a volume entitled *Faces of Charisma* emerged from a conference that took place at New York University's Medieval and Renaissance Center in April 2013. The impetus for the conference was provided by C. Stephen Jaeger's recently published book, *Enchantment: Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West*.¹ A measure of the excitement the conference generated was the early emergence – already during the afternoon coffee break – of a conviction that the exploration of charisma that had begun that day in the form of 20-minute papers merited enlargement and dissemination in the form of a book. The present volume includes most of the papers presented at the conference, which have been subsequently expanded into chapters, as well as a number of essays written specifically for inclusion herein.

Midway through his introduction to *Enchantment*, Jaeger makes an arresting claim: “The terms ‘charisma,’ ‘aura,’ and ‘enchantment’ can be profitably rehabilitated as critical concepts to analyze art, literature, and films, their aesthetics, their impact on the audience, and the psychology of both star and fan.”² On its face this assertion might seem illogical given these terms' usual referents: charisma, a quality of exceptional people; aura, a quality of unique things and places; enchantment, a state of mind. As Jaeger himself brilliantly demonstrates, however, a recognition of the symptoms of these phenomena together with the conditions that give rise to them affords a critic the means to study certain effects of art that otherwise elude analysis, remaining in the realms of faith, illusion, or subjectivity. Using the concept of charisma in particular, the critic is able to delineate that aspect of a life, a text, or an artifact that seems at once the most real and most ineffable to its viewers. Thus, Jaeger conceives of charisma as a quality that may apply to art as well as to person. His conception of charismatic art springs from the category-expanding insight that charisma of person is itself a work of art since, as with a work of art, it

1 C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012).

2 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 9.

entails representation.³ To study charisma is therefore to study representation, and to study charismatic art, as Jaeger's work has shown, is to experiment with a theory of representation that is hospitable to the possibility of nothing less than a breakdown between art and viewer and between art and lived experience. The essays in this volume take up Jaeger's invitation to experiment, exploring the relationship between artifact and person and between art and charisma from the perspectives of premodern history, art, and literature. Some contributions substantiate the concept of charismatic art, others test its possibilities, still others challenge its premises; all found inspiration in Jaeger's gripping exposition.

We begin our introduction with a historiographic survey that situates Jaeger's notion of charismatic art within the several intellectual traditions from which it draws: histories of the concepts of personal charisma, of the sublime, and of aura. Having considered the theoretical foundations for Jaeger's charisma of art, we proceed to an analytical discussion of the three dimensions that underlie our contributors' own approaches to charismatic art: audiences, effects, and operative modalities. In this triadic formation, the vectors of charisma point in many directions: not only to and from the human faces that most works of charismatic art feature but also from and to a work of art's materials, the play of light, for instance, on the surface of a gilded sculpture. In this way, these analyses raise two related questions pertaining to Jaeger's insistence on an anthropocentric source in charismatic art: can the humanness of charisma as it is traditionally understood be imputed to things, and should the exclusivity of an anthropocentric origin in matters charismatic be challenged? Parsing this latter point, further queries emerge: Is representation of a human being a prerequisite for art to act charismatically? And if so, how mimetic does such representation need to be? Does cultural contingency play a part in determining whether or not a work of art will be perceived by viewers as charismatic, or are such responses a matter of our species's neurobiological wiring, our tendency to see sentient life in things, or as Stewart Guthrie famously put it, to see faces in clouds?⁴ What is the role of artistic medium and technology in creating charismatic effects? These and other concerns animate the essays gathered in this volume.

3 As Jaeger puts it, "personal charisma, whether natural or cultivated or a mixture of both in whatever degree, is itself a form of representation and its bearer a kind of living work of art." Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 11.

4 Stewart Elliott Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (Oxford, 1993), p. viii.

From Charisma of Person to Charisma of Art, Via the Sublime and the Aura

Max Weber to C. Stephen Jaeger: From Charisma of Person to Charisma of Art

In contemporary English usage, the word charisma is the one to reach for when we want to describe an attractive yet ineffable quality of a person, whether a movie star, a politician, a TV newscaster, a religious figure, or even an attractive someone, spotted across a crowded room. An elusive charm, an enigmatic magnetism, an indefinable sparkle, charisma is sometimes described as the “X-factor,” a term that captures well the essence of this quality as a personal “something” that defies precise description.⁵ Anthropologist Charles Lindholm observes that in this popular notion of it, charisma is a quality that certain individuals are perceived “to have”; that is, this X-factor is thought to “exist” in an individual in the same way “height or eye color exist,” Frank Sinatra’s blue eyes or Kareem Abdul Jabbar’s seven-foot-two-inch stature, for instance.⁶ As prevalent as it has become as a term for such a winning trait, the word charisma is barely attested in English before the 1940s. Tellingly, the abrupt upswing in its appearance in print in that decade (see fig. 0.1) corresponds with the publication of the first English translations of the work of Max Weber. Indeed, a spike in the use of the term charisma in 1947 coincides precisely with the publication of A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons’s English translation of Weber’s *Economy and Society* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1922), which contains his most extensive discussion of the concept.⁷ *Economy and Society* also contains what is generally considered Weber’s most explicit definition of charisma, which appears in the course of his explication of three kinds of leadership:

The term “charisma” will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exem-

5 On charisma as the “X-factor,” see John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (New York, 2009), pp. 3, 5.

6 Charles Lindholm, *Charisma* (Oxford, 1990), p. 7.

7 Henderson and Parsons published their translation under the title *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.

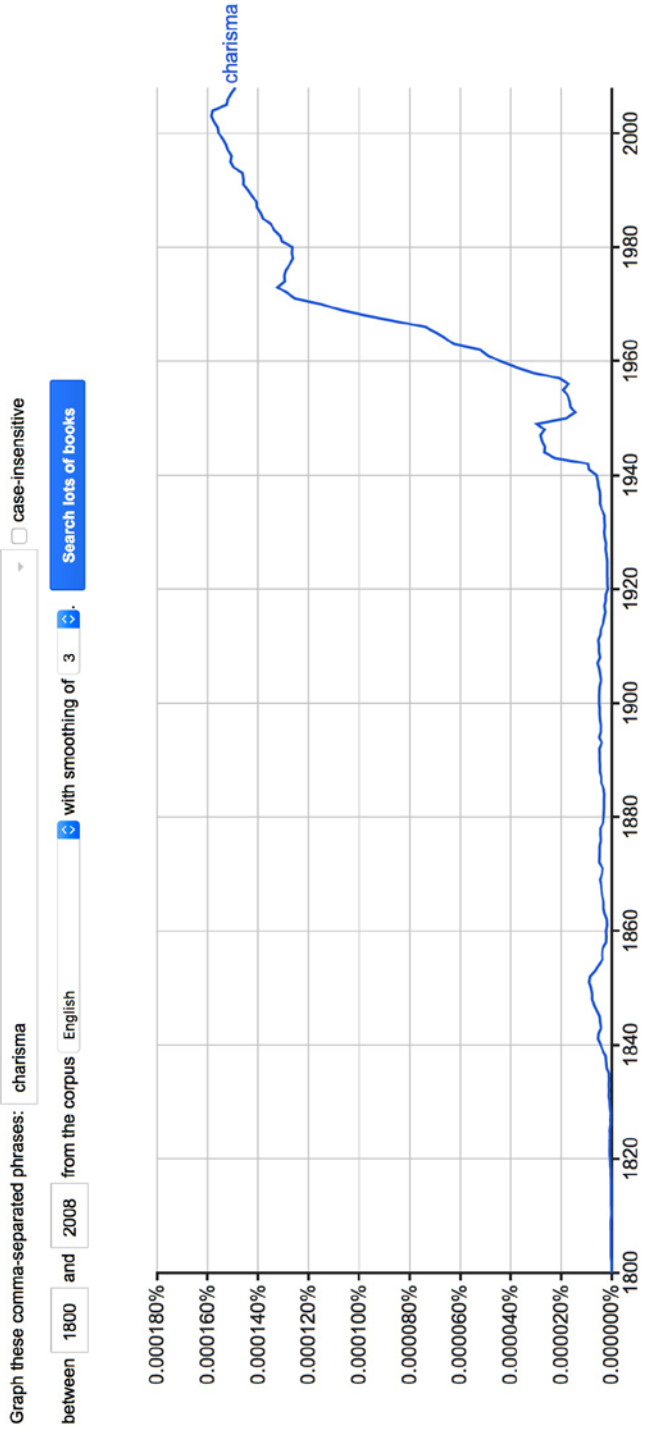


FIGURE 0.1 Google Ngram for "charisma," August 20, 2017.

plary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.⁸

Within a few paragraphs of this definition, Weber expands upon it by describing the role of those by whom the charismatic leader “is treated” as such: “the recognition on the part of those subject to authority is decisive for the validity of charisma.” This all-important recognition, Weber further stipulates, “is a matter of complete personal devotion to the possessor of the quality, arising out of enthusiasm, or of despair and hope.”⁹

Two aspects of Weber’s definition of charisma are worth noting as starting points for establishing the theoretical basis for a charisma of art as Jaeger defines it: that is, as “a quality of works of art” that causes a range of inspiring, transformative, and elevating effects in viewers.¹⁰ First, we can discern that since its debut as a sociological term in the 1940s, the word charisma has acquired a sense in popular culture that deviates significantly from Weber’s definition, for it is clear that the “certain quality” indicated in Weber’s formulation is of a different order from such genetically determined features as height or eye color. Moreover, even though Weber ascribes that inner quality – be it supernatural, superhuman, or otherwise exceptional – to an individual person, he locates the crucial power of determining its meaning in the eye of the beholder. Whatever mysterious quality it is that sets a person apart from the crowd, the term charisma may be applied to it only insofar as it causes *others* to consider him or her extraordinary. In other words, in its essence, Weber’s charisma of person is less personal than interpersonal, less about an individual than about a relationship.¹¹ Given that this charismatic relationship is brought into being by devotees’ assigning meaning to a personal quality, it follows that charisma of person may be understood to spring from processes of signification, if only on the relatively unconscious level of stimulus and response, and to exist not solely within the charismatic individual but rather as a kind of

8 Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talbott Parsons (New York, 1947), pp. 358-359. A slightly different rendering appears in the more recent translation of the work, Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. (New York, 1968), p. 241.

9 Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. Henderson and Parsons, p. 359.

10 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 11.

11 On the essentially relational aspect of charisma, see also Lindholm, *Charisma*, p. 7; Robert C. Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” *Daedalus* 97 (1968), 731-56, at 738; and Roy Wallis, “The Social Construction of Charisma,” in Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, *Sociological Theory, Religion and Collective Action* (Belfast, 1986), pp. 129-54, at 130.

magnetic field that operates between him and the followers he attracts. In this way, Weber's definition of charisma – the very *locus classicus* of the modern idea of charisma of person – already admits of its possible application to art, for interaction with a work of art is also a matter of stimulus and response, and the sensory stimuli a work presents to a viewer may also arouse a sense of devotion that may be experienced as an effect of a special quality of the work. Broaching the possibility of such an alternative use of the term charisma brings us to the second noteworthy aspect of Weber's definition: its self-consciously *ad hoc* nature. Opening with the declaration "the term 'charisma' will be applied," Weber clearly signals his act of appropriating for the purposes of sociological analysis a term with a broader range of senses than the specific phenomenon that he goes on, ever so influentially, to define as charisma.

With Weber's deed of disciplinary term-setting in mind, we may quickly recognize Jaeger's parallel act when, in the opening pages of *Enchantment*, he declares that his study will deal with a subcategory of the sublime "which *I will call* 'charismatic art.'"¹² Just as Jaeger implicitly acknowledges his debt to Weber in this echoing phrase (and explicitly elsewhere in the book), Weber also acknowledges the source from which he drew in turning the word charisma to his own use. In *Economy and Society* he notes, "[t]he concept of 'charisma' ('the gift of grace') is taken from the vocabulary of early Christianity. For the Christian hierocracy Rudolf Sohm, in his *Kirchenrecht*, was the first to clarify the substance of the concept."¹³ A look at Sohm's writing on charisma will allow us to situate both Weber's and Jaeger's concepts of charisma in the context of its usage in the New Testament, where we will discover the origins of Weber's interpersonal charisma as well as key features of Jaeger's charisma of art: in particular, its experiential and medial aspects. Following our discussion of the legacy of Sohm in both Weber and Jaeger, we will turn to more recent writing on charisma in order to provide a context for another major factor in Jaeger's concept of the charisma of art: that is, its precondition in the needs and aspirations of a work of art's audience and its stimulation of an audience's imagination.

While Weber's definitive statements on charisma make their first appearances in *Economy and Society*, his first use of the word appears in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (*Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, 1904-05). Speaking of the Zinzendorf branch of Pietism, he remarks that it "glorified the loyal worker who did not seek acquisition, but

12 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 2 (emphasis added).

13 Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Roth and Wittich, p. 216. See also p. 1112. Rudolph Sohm (1841-1917) was a legal scholar and Protestant church historian.

lived according to the apostolic model, and was thus endowed with the *charisma* of the disciples.”¹⁴ Reading this remark with our post-Weberian understanding of charisma in mind, it may strike us as odd that a lowly “loyal worker” would have even a hint of it, accustomed as we are to thinking of charisma as a quality that sets a person above and apart from such anonymous and subservient figures. As John Potts explains, Weber’s evocation of the Christian disciples’ *charisma* in this remark reflects his study of Sohm’s *Outlines of Church History (Kirchengeschichte im Grundriss, 1894)* and, in particular, its portrayal of the government of the early Christian community.¹⁵ In Sohm’s account, the primitive church was understood to be governed by Christ alone, his followers knit together “solely through the gifts of grace (*χαρίσματα*, *charismata*,) given by Him.” For this reason, the Greek word *ecclesia* was well suited to the early church, for it was an *assembly* of people “ruled, not by man’s word, but by the Word of God.”¹⁶ As Paul stresses in his first letter to the Corinthians, each member of the *ecclesia* has his own gift, and though these gifts are various, the same spirit works in them all, for the good of all: “Now there are a variety of gifts (*χαρισμάτων*), but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”¹⁷ In the light of Paul’s use of the word *charisma* (*χαρίσμα*), we can see that Weber’s “loyal worker” does not “seek acquisition” because he is already “endowed.” He sees his work as an expression of his charisma: that is to say, his God-given gift, or, as Weber puts it elsewhere, his “life purpose willed by God.”¹⁸

In addition, we can see in Paul’s writing that the *charismata* – the gifts of grace – constitute the *medium* through which the Spirit works. Like so many nodes in a charged network, the gifts establish the *ecclesia* as a gathering

14 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, 1930 (New York, 1958), p. 178. The first publication of the work was in two issues of the journal *Archiv* (1904-05). For an overview of pietism, a Lutheran reform movement, see Hartmut Lehmann, “Pietism,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (Oxford, 2008).

15 Potts, *History of Charisma*, p. 119. Potts notes that Weber was also influenced by Sohm’s *Kirchenrecht I* (1892).

16 Rudolf Sohm, *Outlines of Church History*, trans. May Sinclair (London, 1904), p. 33. *Ecclesia* in Greek means “an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned.” See *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* <<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>>, s.v. *ἐκκλησία*.

17 1 Cor. 12:4-7. See also 1 Cor. 7:7 and Rom. 12:6-8.

18 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 177.

capable of holding and transmitting the beneficial charge of the Spirit, a gathering in which the difference between human and divine is thus at least partially dissolved. Writing at quite a different time and on a rather different topic, Jaeger describes the charisma of art in similar terms: that is, as a “medium” in which “opposites coalesce.” He writes, “[t]he dichotomies of real and illusion, life and art, so fundamental to the cultic experience of art in the West, are resolved in the medium of charisma.”¹⁹ And just as the gifts of grace sustain an elevating current in the early Christian community, a work of art, according to Jaeger, may “operate on the viewer” in such a way that “you live briefly in its field of forces.”²⁰ Beyond touching on the medial aspect of charisma, Jaeger’s use of the second-person in “you live” serves to bring out the experiential quality of charisma, a quality that is also implicit in Weber’s description above of the loyal worker who “lived according to the [charismatic] apostolic model,” which was so rewarding in itself as to preclude acquisitive seeking.

Weber clearly understands the Pauline sense of charisma as a divinely given aptitude that contributes to group cohesion and well-being; how does he arrive at an idea of it as a specific aptitude for leadership and one, moreover, that sets a person above his community? A prompt for this shift may also be detected in the writings of Sohm. While stressing how egalitarian the early church was, Sohm also speaks of the “divinely gifted teacher,” an individual who would appear to rank just below the apostles and prophets, according to 1 Corinthians 12:28: “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” The *ecclesia* “obeys” the words of the gifted teacher, Sohm asserts, “only if, and so far as, it recognizes therein the Word of God.”²¹ In this description of the divinely gifted teacher, we can see a prototype of Weber’s charismatic leader. Just as Sohm’s “gifted” – that is, charismatic – teacher elicits obedience to the extent that church members recognize his giftedness – in this case, his capacity to convey the Word of God – so Weber’s charismatic leader is only manifest as such to the extent that he attracts followers who recognize something in him that is extraordinary, which makes him worthy of their devotion. But where for Weber, charisma stems from “a quality of an individual personality”, for Sohm, it is a function of a person’s ability to convey God’s Word. On this aspect of Pauline charisma, New Testament scholar James D.G. Dunn affirms Sohm resoundingly: charisma, he writes, “is not to be confused with human talent and natural ability”; instead, it is “typically an *experience*, an

19 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 24.

20 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 35.

21 Sohm, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 33.

experience of something being accomplished through me.”²² Putting it in terms of our metaphor of energy transmission above, Sohm’s charismatic teacher has the “capacity” to be a conductor – or mediator – of a current that the community shares.²³ By contrast, in the case of Weber’s charismatic leader, the current of energy flows to him, in the form of his followers’ adulation. Weber’s charismatic leader is less a conductor than a magnet, as the popular notion of the “magnetism” of a charismatic person attests.

If Sohm and Weber part ways on the issue of where, exactly, charisma is located – whether in the charismatic person or in the charismatic community – Weber’s inheritors part ways with him on the issue of which comes first – or warrants the closest study – the charismatic individual or his followers, the magnet or the filings. Especially in work on charisma since the late 1960s, researchers in the fields of political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology all tend to focus on followers while characterizing the charismatic leader as an expression of those followers’ needs and aspirations, thus anticipating Jaeger’s assertion that charisma of person is a matter of representation.²⁴ In the vanguard of this new emphasis in the study of charisma were historian Robert C. Tucker and social anthropologist Peter Worsley, whose independent publications in 1968 may be seen, in retrospect, as having set the research agenda for much of the study of charisma of person that has followed. In his publication, which appeared in a special issue of *Daedalus* devoted to the topic of leadership, Tucker argued that in order to understand the sway of charismatic leaders, “we must focus attention *first* upon the followers and their needs.”²⁵ Worsley struck the same chord in his *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, adding that looking solely at the “personality” of a charismatic leader “distracts us” from [his] “social significance as a symbol, a catalyst, a message-bearer.”²⁶ In this triadic description of the charismatic leader’s significance, Worsley captures well the complex dynamics of representation, stimulus and response, and energy transmission that we have already seen at work in the New Testament notion of charisma and, at least with respect to the stimulus and response mechanism, in Weber’s concept of it as well. As we shall see, these

22 James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1975), p. 255 (emphasis in original).

23 OED, s.v. “capacity.” sense 1.c.

24 For a sketch of the reception of Weber’s writing on charisma before the 1960s, see Potts, *A History of Charisma*, p. 131.

25 Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” p. 742 (emphasis added).

26 Worsley, Peter. *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of ‘Cargo’ Cults in Melanesia*, Second, Augmented Edition (New York, 1968), p. xvii.

processes of mediation are also central to the workings of Jaeger's charisma of art.

In the latter decades of the 20th century, research on charisma took the idea of the charismatic person as a symbol and message-bearer further, in effect reversing its terms by arguing that both symbol and message are creations of the charismatic's followers. Writing in 1973, psychologist Irvine Schiffer is already explaining that act of "creation" in terms of artistic production. The charismatic leader, Schiffer argues, is a product of a group's "creative process of charismatic imaging," a process that culminates in the group's "projecting [the charismatic image] outwards onto a suitable chosen object."²⁷ Even though Schiffer sees the group as the prime mover in the making of a charismatic figure, he still envisions a part for the charismatic himself to play: leader and follower alike, he contends, are "artists of sorts" participating "in an aesthetic illusion."²⁸

While Schiffer's description of the charismatic phenomenon – with its references to imaging, artists, and aesthetic illusion – suggests a kinship between the creation of a charismatic person and the creation of a work of visual art, Pierre Bourdieu's 1987 study of the charisma of prophets implies a likeness between charisma and the production of literary art. Akin to Sohm's gifted teacher, Bourdieu's prophet is charismatic by virtue of his "prophetic word."²⁹ But while the gifted teacher mediated the word of God, the prophet, as Bourdieu sees it, mediates the already present but inarticulate distress or longing of the people, people who become the prophet's ardent followers precisely because of his ability to represent their feelings. Bourdieu describes this interaction as a semiotic process: the prophet "brings about, in both his discourse and his person, the meeting of a signifier and a pre-existing signified."³⁰ Expanding on Bourdieu, we might say that in signifying unspoken feelings and dreams, thereby arousing a devoted following, the charismatic prophet is like a poet, who, by presenting readers with a recognizable but previously unarticulated complex of sorrow or joy or desire, may leave them feeling not only

27 Irvine Schiffer, *Charisma: A Psychoanalytic Look at Mass Society* (New York, 1973), pp. 17, 19.

28 Schiffer, *Charisma*, p. 148. Schiffer's use of the terms "imaging" and "imagery" may be misleading to readers outside of the field of psychology, where "imagery" may refer to a range of mental representations. See Andrew M. Colman, "Imagery," in *A Dictionary of Psychology* (Oxford, 2015).

29 Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion," trans. by Chris Turner, in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, eds. Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (London, 1987), pp. 119-36, at 127.

30 Bourdieu, "Legitimation," p. 130.

“entranced,” as Shelley described the nightingale poet’s auditors, but also mystically allied with and grateful to the poet him or herself.³¹

What are the preconditions of the creative acts Schiffer and Bourdieu describe? They, along with Tucker, Worsley, and other members of the “social construction of charisma school,” uphold Weber’s view, quoted above, that followers cleave to a charismatic leader “out of enthusiasm, or of despair and hope.”³² In this way, Tucker notes that a group’s “acute malaise” predisposes it to follow a “salvationist character,” and Bryan R. Wilson argues that the “growth of anxieties and the disruption of normal life” create a “demand” that is met by a person of “supposed *extraordinary* supernatural power.”³³ These and other late 20th-century scholars also follow Weber in appreciating that a group’s distress may take many forms; Weber lists “psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, [and] political.”³⁴ Tucker’s more concrete list runs from such threats to bodily integrity as “persecution, catastrophes (for example, famine, drought)” to threats to cultural identity such as “the feelings of oppression in peoples ruled by foreigners.”³⁵ On the topic of identity, developmental psychologist Erik H. Erikson counts living in an “identity vacuum” as a contributor to the condition of being “charisma hungry.”³⁶ In speaking of such a range of preconditions, these writers also support Weber’s contention that charisma is a phenomenon related to “[a]ll *extraordinary* needs, i.e. those which *transcend* the sphere of everyday economic routines.”³⁷ Such “*extraordinary* needs” lead to Wilson’s “demand” for the charismatic leader, to Erikson’s “charisma hunger,” and to Schiffer’s “creative process of charismatic imaging”: all activities that also uphold Weber’s view that charisma is “the specifically *creative* revolutionary force of history.”³⁸

31 Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” qtd. in Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* (New York, 1999), p. 14. The title of Hirsch’s book also speaks to the devotion a poem may inspire.

32 The term “social construction of charisma school” is Potts’s in *A History of Charisma*, p. 135. See his excellent overview of work in the field as well as a discussion of its detractors, in particular, Len Oakes, in the same work, pp. 130-36.

33 Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” p. 743; Bryan R. Wilson, *The Noble Savages: The Primitive Origins of Charisma and Its Contemporary Survival* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 94.

34 Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Roth and Wittich, p. 1112.

35 Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” p. 744-45.

36 Erik H. Erikson, oral remarks, qtd. in Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” p. 745.

37 Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Roth and Wittich, p. 1111 (emphasis in original).

38 Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Roth and Wittich, p. 1117 (emphasis added).

To the extent that charisma is a creative force, it is arguably also a force that draws upon our faculty of imagination, and here our survey of the reception of Weber meets up with Jaeger, who writes that one of the effects of charisma of person is that it stimulates the imagination.³⁹ His conception of the charisma of art also entails the activation of viewers' imaginations as it may not only respond to a viewer's enthusiasm, despair, or hope but also create visions of an extraordinary, heightened level of existence. Reference to such elevating and transporting visions, however, does not appear in the history of the concept of charisma; to place that aspect of Jaeger's charisma of art in its larger context, we must turn to the history of the sublime, for Weber's writings, however influential, do not exhaust the sources upon which Jaeger has built his own approach to charisma. In fact, he may be the first scholar to integrate the phenomena of the sublime, charisma, and the aura.⁴⁰

The Sublime, Charisma, Aura

Jaeger understands charisma to be a subcategory of the sublime, but embedding medieval charisma within the sublime is an interpretative move that is beset with challenges. The sublime, a high rhetorical and literary style cultivated in antiquity, was specifically examined in a 1st- or 3rd-century CE unfinished treatise, *On Sublimity* (Περὶ ὑψους, *Peri Hupsous*).⁴¹ Written in Greek and attributed to the rhetorician Longinus, this treatise was unknown in western Europe until the 16th century. During the 18th century, modern interpretations of Longinus transformed his sublime (*hupsos*) into an influential critical concept in the fields of aesthetics and philosophy.⁴² Perhaps paralleling the

39 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 23.

40 See, however, Joseph W.H. Lough, *Weber and the Persistence of Religion: Social Theory, Capitalism and the Sublime* (New York, 2006), who argues that Weber's adoption of a Neo-Kantian theory of the sublime prevented him from recognizing the sublime character of capitalism.

41 Bibliography on the sublime is huge and can only be selective here. In addition to the studies cited below, we have consulted Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge, 2015); Doran seeks "to provide a detailed and analytical treatment of the key theories of sublimity" and does so from the perspective "that the sublime possesses an intrinsic critical function," pp. 2-3.

42 James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 18; Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, p. 8. Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels, and Maarten Delbeke, "Introduction," in *Translations of the Sublime. The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus' Peri Hupsous in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre*, eds. Van Eck, Bussels, Delbeke, and Jürgen Pieters (Leiden, 2012), pp. 1-10, argue at pp. 1-2 for a 15th-century revival of the sublime and contend that its impact extended beyond rhetoric and literature to embrace the arts, architecture, and the theater.

historical diffusion of Longinus's disquisition, modern scholarship on the Middle Ages has tended to be equivocal about the question of the sublime, often concluding that its apparent absence in medieval culture is in character with the alleged mediocrity of the period.⁴³ The revivification of a medieval sublime by Jaeger is integral to his conception of charismatic art.⁴⁴

Jaeger's approach to the sublime claims roots in Longinus, but a Longinus interpreted by a historiography that tends to downplay the *Peri Hupsous*'s status as a technical treatise for teaching the sublime style, rather considering the work to be an investigation of the sublime as a transcendent quality present *in* writing.⁴⁵ This shift of emphasis, from the technical brilliance of a sublime text to the sublimity encountered *in* written discourse originated with Nicolas Boileau's French translation, *Traité du sublime ou du merveilleux dans le discours, traduit du grec de Longin* (1674). Boileau transformed Longinus's sublime style, which belonged to language as an objective quality of discourse, into the sublime, conceived as an independent transcendent essence, expressed in and through language to be sure, but expressible by other arts as well.⁴⁶ Boileau's redefinition of the sublime was immensely influential and, relayed by the codifications of Edmund Burke and Kant, still carries much weight in current scholarship as an aesthetic concept associated with a particular experience of

43 Paul Binski, "Reflections on the 'Wonderful Height and Size' of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime," in *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), pp. 129-56, at pp. 129-30.

44 In his edited volume, *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics*, Jaeger seeks to show that the Middle Ages knew a sublime that had no reference to Longinus. The project has been welcomed by Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, pp. 18-19 but has also provoked disagreement, Mary Carruthers, "Terror, Horror and the Fear of God, or, Why There Is No Medieval Sublime," in *Truthe is the beste': A Festschrift in Honour of A.V.C. Schmidt*, eds. Nicolas Jacobs and Gerald Morgan (Oxford, 2014), pp. 17-36, and below at note 68.

45 Timothy M. Costelloe, "The Sublime: A Short Introduction to a Long History," in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Costelloe (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 1-7, at p. 4. By contrast, Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, pp. 6, 103, sees in Boileau "the first interpreter to truly understand Longinus's theory of sublimity," and advocates a philosophical reading of Longinus while denouncing the limits of a rhetorical interpretation of *Peri Hupsous*.

46 Costelloe, "The Sublime," pp. 4, 7. Éva Madeleine Martin, "The 'Prehistory' of the Sublime in Early Modern France: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," in Costelloe, *The Sublime*, pp. 77-101. The essays gathered in van Eck et al., *Translations of the Sublime* investigate pre-Boileau early editions and translations of Longinus in England, Italy, and the "Introduction," pp. 3-4 notes that neither Boileau's French translation nor Burke's *Inquiry* superseded older versions of Longinus's treatise, which continued to be consulted.

art, nature, and the self.⁴⁷ Boileau's neologism, however hermeneutically fruitful, nevertheless rests upon a reading of Longinus that remains controversial to this day.⁴⁸ Interpretation of the *Peri Hupsous* is complicated: the surviving treatise is fragmentary, and the attribution to Longinus, though widely accepted, is still debated. Furthermore, the treatise does not fit neatly within the framework of didactic technical writing on rhetoric,⁴⁹ while Longinus propounded no straightforward definitions of the sublime, offering only oblique descriptions.⁵⁰

Scholars who resist the transformation of the ancient sublime into an essence, argue that for Longinus sublimity pertained to an elevated style of rhetorical expression and did not extend to the visual arts, which were to be judged by other criteria.⁵¹ They contend that Longinus situated his work within the tradition of didactic and technographic exposition of rhetoric; that he was primarily providing practical advice for achieving greatness in discourse so as to produce a specific type of literary effect.⁵² They emphasize his characterization of language as a light for thoughts and arguments.⁵³ They quote his statements on the effectiveness of purely stylistic devices,⁵⁴ his examples of sentences that achieved sublimity purely through sentence-construction,⁵⁵ and his allusions to the sublime as a discursive excellence that secured the everlasting fame of great writers while provoking an astonished and overwhelming ecstasy in the souls of experienced literary readers. Longinus's

47 Van Eck, Bussels, and Delbeke, "Introduction," pp. 2-3. Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, p. 6 argues for Boileau's significant contribution to the concept of the sublime but against the notion that he invented Longinus's sublime. Doran considers rather that Boileau truly understood Longinus; see above at notes 41 and 45 for Doran's position that interpretations of Longinus cannot rest upon a rhetorical reading of the *Peri Hupsous*. Studies opposing this view are cited at notes 46, 48-49, 52-53.

48 Van Eck, Bussels, Delbeke, "Introduction," p. 3, discusses the ways that 18th-century aesthetics shaped the interpretation of the sublime as described by Longinus and his early modern translations. Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, describes the "current biases" that affect present-day understanding of the sublime in antiquity, pp. 7-18.

49 Malcolm Heath, "Longinus and the Ancient Sublime," in Costelloe, *The Sublime*, pp. 11-23, at pp. 15-16.

50 Heath, "Longinus and the Ancient Sublime," in Costelloe, *The Sublime*, p. 12.

51 Heath, "Longinus and the Ancient Sublime," p. 14.

52 Heath, "Longinus and the Ancient Sublime," p. 17; Heath, "Longinus on Sublimity," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 45 (1999), 43-74, at p. 59.

53 Heath, "Longinus on Sublimity," p. 60: "such language is as it were a light for the thoughts and arguments."

54 Heath, "Longinus on Sublimity," p. 62.

55 Heath, "Longinus on Sublimity," p. 62; Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, pp. 132, 133-34.

sublime is more than convincing: it is compelling and irresistible.⁵⁶ However it seems to require education, moral stature, and expertise on the part of all involved for its grandeur to have full effect. Yet Longinus did also posit the universal impact of genuine sublimity, universal consent being for him the ultimate marker of truth.⁵⁷

Scholars maintaining that the sublime in *Peri Hupsous* is rhetorical are aware that Longinus identified five sources for the magnification of style: “thought, emotion, figures of thought and speech, diction [...], and composition [...]”⁵⁸ Particularly with reference to thought as the first-mentioned factor for elevating speech, they stress that the great thought at work in Longinus’s literary sublime consists primarily in the ability to balance in discourse the selection, combination, representation, and amplification of components so that the resultant phrases will grip and transport their readers.⁵⁹ For Longinus, “thought in discourse and its expression are for the most part mutually implicated.”⁶⁰ He even questioned whether expression devoid of great thought could achieve sublimity and concluded his consideration of Demosthenes’s Marathon Oath with an assertion that in this text no thought could have achieved sublimity independently of expression.⁶¹

It is from Longinus’s list of the five sources of sublimity that many interpreters, in the wake of Boileau, have come to consider that his *Peri Hupsous* was not about a category of style but concerned with transcendence instead.⁶² Since *Peri Hupsous* shows Neoplatonist tendencies and discusses the sublime as a human desire to reach “near to the greatness of the mind of God,”⁶³ they raise this aspiration for greatest things to the status of a *sine qua non* condition for

56 Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 12.

57 Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 13; Paul Binski in this volume locates the possibility of artistic charisma in the in-between between patterns of elite education and models of artifactual style.

58 Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 17.

59 Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, p. 69.

60 Cited by Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 19, and see Heath’s further analysis at p. 22.

61 Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 19.

62 For a pithy and articulate presentation of the position that the currency of the modern concept of sublimity cannot rest upon an understanding of the *Peri Hupsous* as a rhetorical disquisition of the grand style, and therefore depends upon an interpretation of the *Peri Hupsous* as the source for featuring the sublime as an aesthetic and philosophical concept, see Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, pp. 27-47, 58-81, 97-99, 110-14. As discussed earlier in this essay, a strong scholarly trend attributes to Boileau’s reading of Longinus the conceptualization of the sublime in aesthetic and philosophical terms.

63 Cited in Heath, “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” p. 23.

sublimity,⁶⁴ thus situating both the modes (high-mindedness, great thought, noble passions) and the effects (ecstasy, self-transcendence) of the sublime in the subject. This notion of the sublime thus originates in the subjectivity of the great, and affects the subjectivity of its audience directly. No longer a dynamic logic of expression that sets forces into motion,⁶⁵ the sublime here becomes an essential component of style, a revelation of a transcendental thought or being which, animating representation, produces rapturous emotion. Art discloses, in a flash of epiphany, that grandeur that imprints its sublime quality.⁶⁶ From having been understood as a powerful capacity of expression,⁶⁷ the sublime comes to be judged primarily by its effects within texts and on readers, as if its own reality were an ideal, not of this world.

Interpretations of the *Peri Hupsous*'s legacy, thus, have been divided about the very nature of *hupsos* – whether it is a feature of rhetoric, or an un-locatable force – and about the degree to which subjectivity or craft, nature or art, may spark a sublime experience. Such interpretations are nevertheless unanimous in agreeing that the sublime produces elation, inspiration, transportation, and self-transcendence in beholders.

The philosophical and Neoplatonic Longinus has appeal for medievalists. His sublime condones religious transcendence as well as a belief in humankind's natural vocation to transcend sensible limits. It also implied the reality of the lofty powers (both divine and human) operating through representational media capable of generating transformative experiences of the grand, the marvelous, and the supernatural.⁶⁸ Such a sublime rendered sublime; it

64 A summary of the debate can be found in Heath, "Longinus on Sublimity," pp. 60-62.

65 Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, p. 12.

66 Costelloe, "The Sublime," p. 5. We follow here Samuel Holt Monk's reading of Boileau in his *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (New York, 1935), pp. 29-32: "Boileau's terms ... indubitably tell us that the sublime, apart from sublime style, must be a great thought and that it must awaken strong emotions in the reader or the audience. This is the new, the eighteenth-century, sublime for which Boileau is responsible." See a criticism of Monk's reading in Doran, *Theory of the Sublime*, p. 2 and pp. 99-100. C. Stephen Jaeger, "Richard of St. Victor and the Medieval Sublime," in *Magnificence and the Sublime*, pp. 157-78, at pp. 158-62, stresses agreement between Longinus, Augustine, and Richard of St. Victor, presenting a Longinus for whom "the sources of the Sublime are, first, grand conceptions, then forceful and enthusiastic passions ... Matters of formulation are secondary ... dignified and elevated word-arrangement derive from art."

67 Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, p. 13.

68 Carruthers, "Terror, Horror and the Fear of God," contends that the Middle Ages did not know the sublime beyond its obvious meaning as a rhetorical device. She argues however for the existence of emotional effects that are associated with experiences of sublimity,

was an intersubjective dynamic that communicated high-mindedness and was therefore also didactic.⁶⁹

In surveying this theoretical history of the sublime within which Jaeger has developed his reading of Longinus's *hupsos*, it becomes apparent that Boileau's realist and philosophical reading readily accommodates medieval understandings and experiences of grandeur, wonder, reality, pedagogy, subjectivity, and religious rapture. One may indeed wonder if Boileau's reading of the sublime might not in fact have been informed by an understanding of such medieval experiences, which were not confined to texts alone but occurred in the natural and artifactual world.⁷⁰ This possibility, which would argue in favor of a medieval contribution to a post-Longinian understanding of the sublime,⁷¹ becomes more convincing if the *Peri Hupsous* is read as a late antique rhetorical treatise. In that case, it is possible to trace, through 15th-century (and later) translations and interpretations of the *Peri Hupsous*, accretions that were generated by a medieval search for "the greatness of wonder,"⁷² which lifted experience beyond the sensible world.⁷³

Our interest in Jaeger's treatment of the medieval sublime centers on his conflation of charisma with sublimity. Whereas the sublime has fairly recently entered the orbit of Jaeger's scholarship, charisma has long been a focus of his

such as terror, but shows that such effects were unaesthetic, senseless, transporting beyond the senses. From this perspective, there was no medieval sublime. Beth Williamson, in her judicious analysis of the limited ways that the concept of the sublime pertains to medieval art, concludes that art was sublime when it elicited "transcendent experience of the divine": "How Magnificent Was Medieval Art?," in *Magnificence and the Sublime*, ed. Jaeger, pp. 243-62, especially at pp. 252-62.

69 Jaeger, "Richard of St. Victor," p. 166; Dolan, *Theory of the Sublime*, p. 81.

70 See the essays gathered in Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime*.

71 One must certainly conceive that whatever sublime the Middle Ages might have contributed, it was a sublime without Longinus, Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, pp. 18-25.

72 Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin Major [The Mystical Ark]*, cited by Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, p. 22.

73 See the essays gathered in *Translations of the Sublime* and in *Magnificence and the Sublime*. Porter, *Sublime in Antiquity*, pp. 21-23, attributes the appearance of a Longinian sublime in Augustine's writings to contemporary traditions of the sublime that existed and survived independently of Longinus. He also notes that such an explanation cannot easily account for later Christian writers whose expressions of the soul's ravishment through yearning for higher things are very similar to Longinus's, although Longinus was unavailable to them. Porter concludes that both the experience and the conception of the sublime could occur without reference to Longinus, who should be seen as a witness and contributor to an ongoing flow of sublime traditions. At any rate, our point here is that medieval authors did develop a distinct, Christian sublime in thought and writing, which may well have influenced both modern interest in and interpretations of Longinus.

attention. In his *Envy of Angels* (1994), he presented an 11th-century culture of charisma centered on the cultured body as a work of art capable of inspiring emulation and of didactically forming disciplined bodies. Both personal and exemplary, such charisma was communicable and transformative of raw material into talented human beings.⁷⁴ Jaeger observed, however, that by the 12th century the charisma of human presence had become susceptible to textual representation, so that individuals were primed to realize that texts, and other lifeless forms of representation could, if skillfully crafted, both embody heroic and exceptional characters and compel admiration and imitation.⁷⁵ In *Enchantment*, Jaeger further investigates the themes he developed in *The Envy of Angels*, but on a wider cultural scale extending from the world of Homer to that of Woody Allen. His essay in the present volume compares a charismatic personality (St. Francis) capable of being textually represented, to charismatic texts that had been authored by a charismatic figure (St. Bernard) whose personal charisma failed to come through in stories written about him by others. Bernard's own writings, however, are charismatic because, though not biographical, they present an unmediated encounter with his personality infused within his sublime style.⁷⁶ It is in such circumstances that the overlap of Longinus's sublimity with Jaeger's charisma would be expected, since Longinus's sublime can affect audiences through such techniques as style. Jaeger, however, sees charisma as rooted in physical presence and character, and his concept of charisma encapsulates a sublime intrinsic to its effects, namely the ecstasy and alteration of the self. There might perhaps have been here an opportunity to consider how Longinus's technical approach to sublimity of style would have helped to produce a theoretical underpinning for analyzing the effective expression of charisma by art.

Jaeger's charismatic art is necessarily representational, rendered hypermimetic by the appeal of that which it represents, typically a charismatic person.⁷⁷ One is reminded of a late medieval conception of the term sublime

74 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels. Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 7-8, 39-40, 77-78.

75 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, pp. 191-92, where the author gives a definition of charismatic art.

76 Jaeger's essay in this volume expands his remarks on Bernard's 'autography,' that is, his ability to charge narratives with his own charisma without describing himself, *Enchantment*, pp. 145-46.

77 Jaeger asks of the Christ Pantocrator at St. Catherine Monastery, Mount Sinai: "What need do the realism and verisimilitude in this portrait satisfy? ... What is important here is that it is not mere verisimilitude that is at work ..., but the magnetism of an extraordinary personality present in an extraordinary physiognomy." *Enchantment*, p. 110 and fig. 8, and p. 122 for similar conclusions about the hyper-mimesis of icons.

as an alchemical operation that transformed a solid thing into a higher natural form.⁷⁸ As with alchemy, the operation of reciprocal mimesis – between living characters and their inanimate representations further capable of prompting imitation by entranced beholders – tends to remain mysterious in Jaeger's *Enchantment*. The primary title of his book, *Enchantment*, indeed suggests an exploration of charismatic art by consideration of the magical fascination it exerts upon viewers. The actual transfer of charisma from person to object is explained (away) by hyper-mimesis, while the artifactual embodiment of the living reality of a person is inferred from the fact that charismatic art blurs the line between empirical reality and fiction, producing the enchanting illusion of a higher yet attainable reality. Because of its primary situation in emotional reactions, charisma seems principally to be a matter of subjectivity, that of the charismatic persons whose self-presentation and performance aesthetically display their extraordinary characters, as well as that of their enchanted followers. Jaeger's charisma of art seems fundamentally affective, measured by the beholder's stirred perception and imagination. The ability of art to be charismatic, remains rooted in the subject's acts of perception, and as such many additional factors that may contribute to the phenomenon remain to be explored.

Jaeger's concept of the aura reinforces the primacy of a beholder's subjectivity still further. Well aware of the decades of analysis devoted to Walter Benjamin's celebrated essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Jaeger follows another lead, Benjamin's essay on Charles Baudelaire, to articulate his own definition of aura as a diaphanous halo of imaginative and commemorative associations an object triggers in the mind of a viewer.⁷⁹ As Jaeger has it, aura truly exists only in the mind of the beholder, who nevertheless projects back the aura onto the object of its activation, which is then perceived as auratic in and of itself.⁸⁰ Aura thus overlaps with charisma, both being rooted in a subjective perception or collective consciousness, though without aura, there is no charisma.⁸¹ Aura therefore is the catalyst of charisma,

78 Costelloe, "The Sublime," p. 3.

79 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 21.

80 Jaeger, "Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory," *Narrating Charisma*, special issue of *New German Critique*, 114 (2011), 17-34, at pp. 21-22; Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 130-31, on the auratic character of relics and its reliance upon the visible aura of reliquaries, and pp. 132-33: concluding remarks in which Jaeger compares the mimetic icon, which transmits sanctity by charisma, to the memento relic, which does so by aura.

81 Eva Horn, "Introduction," *Narrating Charisma*, special issue of *New German Critique* 114 (2011), 1-16, at p. 16; Jaeger, "Aura and Charisma," p. 17, points out that the two categories of charisma and aura have never been jointly considered despite their relatedness.

a property held by a person, a style, or any medium and its entrancing recognition by an individual or group's reception.⁸² A product of a viewer's imagination, aura forms around all sorts of things; charisma, on the other hand, requires a person, who radiates toward an auratically susceptible beholder. Human bodies and subjectivity are critical to Jaeger's conception of the integrated operation of aura, charisma, and enchantment.

Enchantment. Charismatic Art, Agency, Materiality

In *Enchantment*, Jaeger considers the role of literary plots and artifacts for the construction and transmission of charisma, as well as the representational qualities of works of art which, magnifying the persons or worlds they represent, are capable of lifting their viewers beyond the natural human scope of their daily lives.⁸³ Jaeger's commitment to reveal charisma's aesthetic processes supports an argument about the power of art to aggrandize, to shape a hyper-reality, to impact human thought and behavior.⁸⁴ As such, *Enchantment* engages developing trends in art history that consider works of art as possessing qualities and capacities of living beings.⁸⁵ As we have seen, however, Jaeger eschews a systematic tracking of the means by which art produces charismatic effects, preferring to infer charisma from a work's reception.⁸⁶ Our volume seeks to counterbalance Jaeger's primary focus on reaction by considering the performance of charismatic art via its artifactual modes. We do not posit qualities inherent in the artwork, but we do complicate its representational strategy by drawing attention to a network of interactions particularly among its physical components, such as technicity, composition, dazzling arrangement of materials, inner dynamics of form and matter, tendencies for particular situational locations, any active combination of which may enthrall.⁸⁷ Artifacts create settings that trigger cognitive and emotional reactions to be sure, but they also generate direct physical engagement and stimulate practices that play an important role in transformative experiences. By examining both action and reaction as actions, we emphasize the multi-faceted agency of charismatic occurrences, querying the relationship between art and beholder so as to identify the multidirectional intermediary axes of relations between them.

82 Eva Horn, "Introduction," pp. 7, 9, 11, 16.

83 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, *passim*; see also his "Aura and Charisma," p. 18.

84 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 5 of the introduction, where he acknowledges the influence of W.J.T Mitchell, Alfred Gell, and David Freedberg. The power of images is further analyzed by David Morgan, *Images at Work. The Material Culture of Enchantment* (Oxford, 2018).

85 See also Binski's essay in this volume.

86 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 6.

87 As famously argued by Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics* (1992), 40-63.

Charisma, in this volume, transports and translates both artifacts and beholders;⁸⁸ both reciprocally exercise agency and endure metamorphosis. Agency is traditionally considered an attribute of persons, and is controversially extended to the inanimate world.⁸⁹ Yet when agency, defined as the capacity to cause, is distinguished from intentionality, a psychological human trait, it becomes possible to conceive that, in its extraordinary effect, charismatic art has agency, and not only as a mimetic mediator of personal charisma or a crystallizer of aura.⁹⁰ It is to the study of the modalities of this particular agency that the present volume is devoted.

Charismatic Art

Audiences

Jaeger, as we have seen, argues that evidence of a work's widespread appeal validates its charisma. For this reason, his study of charisma of art entails first and foremost a study of viewers and of reception, and the authors of all the essays in this volume highlight the popular renown of their objects of study. Indeed, taken together, these objects make a hit parade of some of the most well-known works of medieval art, not to mention the human figures they represent: from Andrew Romig's study of the biography of Charlemagne (d. 814) by Einhard (d. 840), to Jacqueline Jung's study of the Wise and Foolish Virgins of Magdeburg Cathedral, to Andrey Egorov's study of statues of the Nine Worthies, to name only three. What was it about these audiences that made them respond to these works in such numbers and what did they find in them that was so attractive? With respect to their characteristics and sensibilities, the audiences discussed in this volume vary widely: from Joseph Ackley's church-goers dazzled by the sight of a winged altarpiece opened to reveal its gilded reliquaries to Lynsey McCulloch's savvy theater audiences enjoying the enchantment of seeing through the enchantment of automata. Similarly, in examining such audience responses, our authors vary widely with respect to

88 The concept of translation is loosely borrowed here from Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford, 2005); *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

89 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 16-21, 66; Daniel Miller, ed., *Materiality* (Durham, 2005), p. 11; Carl Knappet, *Thinking through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 22.

90 Knappet, *Thinking through Material Culture*, pp. 22-24.

their views regarding where exactly, between art object and art viewer, the charisma of a work of art lies.

In Jaeger's view, a state of need coupled with aspiration makes readers and viewers especially receptive to the spell of a work of art.⁹¹ In the essays collected here, this all-important mixture of psychological need and aspiration often pertains to matters of identity and recognition within a context of some form of redemption a work of art seems to proffer. The charisma of Eric Gustafson's Franciscan space, for instance, is grounded in the laity's yearning for a liturgical space that fostered intimacy with the praying friars and promoted a sense of spiritual ascent toward God. Paroma Chatterjee's spellbinding classical statues served to differentiate the educated elites of Constantinople, who perceived their wondrous sway, from the brutish Latin crusaders, who could not. In Gavin Richardson's psychoanalytical analysis, Thomas Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* redeems Hoccleve (c.1368-1426) himself. The charismatic force here was self-reflexive: the poet responded to the tale's allure in translating it and that very process transformed him into the recipient of the redemptive effect of what Jaeger calls "life writing."⁹² In the examples of Andrew Romig's Carolingian biography and Jaeger's Franciscan hagiography, the projection of valor, beauty, virtue, and humility exerts a magnetic pull on beholders, persuading them to imitate the greater model. The brief openings of winged altarpieces described by Ackley offered tantalizing glimpses of elevated dimensions, thus fulfilling a desire both for extra-ordinary experience and a heightened sense of corporate identity.

To the extent that audiences respond to charismatic art on the basis of their hopes and dreams, hopes and dreams that may flame all the more brightly for having been awakened from states of privation, charismatic art entails certain forms of audience engagement and suppresses others. Audiences who respond to the charisma of a work of art tend to engage with its surface rather than its depth since they are drawn to imitate rather than to interpret it. In *Enchantment*, Jaeger writes that the question viewers put to this kind of art is not 'What does it mean?' but rather, 'How must I act to be like Gawain, Tristan, or Lancelot, Jesus or Buddha?' He insists that meaning, interpretation, and hermeneutics – the apparatus of commentary inherited from Western exegetical tradition – are minor in the face of charismatic force; they are an intellectual charade played behind or above the surface drama of authority and influence.⁹³ Many authors in this volume have this kind of audience engagement in mind in discerning

91 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 15-22.

92 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 149. See also his essay in this volume.

93 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 183-84.

the aspects of a work of art that may be subject to charismatological analysis.⁹⁴ In this way, Ackley suggests that the symbolic meanings of silver and gold notwithstanding, his audiences were likely moved primarily by these precious metals' physical brightness. Similarly, Jung focuses on the facial expressions of the Wise and Foolish Virgins of Magdeburg as the sculptural innovation that would have made these Virgins charismatic compared to other instances of the motif that were only didactic. Again, Egorov argues that the gazes of viewers encountering the Nine Worthies of Mechelen would have been drawn less to their coats of arms, which register their historical significance, than to the gazes these figures seem to return.

Given an understanding of the charisma of art as an art of surfaces, one might conclude that an educated, interpretive approach to it would miss the point entirely, would break the spell. According to other authors in this volume, however, charisma of art is not so fragile. In Binski's view, audiences did not respond to the crafted surfaces of Gothic art with either emotion or with a desire to emulate. From the reactions such art caused, such as the awakening of charitable impulses, Binski concludes that Gothic statuary operated at the intersection of pleasurable experience and meaning. Whereas for Jaeger, critical judgment kills enchantment,⁹⁵ for Binski, the experience of wonder and the apprehension of significance are inseparable aspects of viewers' engagements with works of Gothic art such as the Lady Chapel at Ely. Perceptions of the significance of a work of Gothic art would spring from its viewers' education. Education is also a key factor in Chatterjee's study of the projected audiences of *De signis* by Byzantine chronicler Nicetas Choniates (d. 1217), according to whom only those viewers endowed with rhetorical and historical sophistication were susceptible to the living, spellbinding quality of the classical statuary that adorned the city of Constantinople. Yet to be susceptible to charisma did not mean, for this audience, to be swept away by overwhelming emotion; instead, it meant willingly acquiescing to the emotions of admiration and awe while also retaining the critical distance necessary for recognizing an artwork's historical significance, thereby investing it with meaning as well as wonder. It is this level of emotional and cognitive refinement that Choniates deploys as a shibboleth to distinguish the people of Constantinople as ideal

94 Jaeger created a neologism that receives two spellings in this volume. Whereas he coined the word charismatology, in keeping with the word charismata, to designate the study of charisma, the editors and contributors adopted the term charismatology, following the Oxford English Dictionary which has -ology as a suffix for an academic discipline.

95 Jaeger, "Aura and Charisma," p. 34.

viewers of its statuary from the Latin crusaders, whose gross ignorance rendered them impervious to its aesthetic and historical emanations. Blinded by their lack of education, the Latin conquerors of Constantinople had no compunction about sacking the city and purloining its art, turning a timeless historical fabric into booty.

Certain characteristics of audiences thus acted as filters, screening them from charisma's power. In Byzantium, an inadequate education was a bar to experiencing charisma; in the Carolingian world studied by Romig, the opposite situation prevailed: there, the desire to resist charisma – to throw up one's own screen against it – was a mark of wisdom. In this way, in his *De imagine Tetrici* (829, *On the Statue of Tetricus*), Walahfrid Strabo (808/809-49) mused over a statuary group centered on Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths (454-526), which had enthralled Charlemagne to the point of having it installed in Aachen. Romig's reading of the poem points to the charismatic effect the statue had on Charlemagne but also draws attention to Strabo's denunciation of Charlemagne's enchantment as a form of idolatry. As the poem continues, Strabo attempts to shield Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, against the influence of such art, asserting that it provided a false model of kingship.

Thus, some of the audiences analyzed in this volume's essays, though acknowledging the impact of charisma, proved insensitive or resistant to it. That audiences' reactions can fall short of enchantment raises a crucial question concerning the locus and operations of charismatic force, a point to which we shall return.⁹⁶

Effects

We began our discussion of the audiences of charismatic art by noting that their large size is their single shared characteristic and also the single best validation of a work's charisma. As we turn to the effects of charismatic art, we return to this statement to note its logical implication: the same widespread response that validates the charisma of a work of art also constitutes the primary effect of charismatic art, for it is only in the hearts and minds and bodies of those large audiences that charismatic effects are felt. Further differentiation of charismatic effects is a matter of identifying the varieties of response that a work induces. In Jaeger's view, charismatic art registers its effects in readers' or viewers' sense of intoxication and enchantment, in their urge toward devotion or imitation, in their coalescing around a cause or group identity, in their flights of imagination, and in their rapt participation in a heightened life, a life that seems to proceed in a realm between life and art, one

96 See below in this introduction, *Charisma: A Face-Lift*.

whose real brilliance is a function of its admixture of illusion.⁹⁷ In all of these ways – again, in Jaeger’s view – charisma of art is like romantic love: though in most cases its beguiling force is for the good, it may also render a person vulnerable to such negative effects as seduction, obsession, disillusionment, and even hatred.⁹⁸

The focused and historically contextualized studies in this volume contribute new examples of the beneficent effects of charismatic art but also present several cases of its provoking negative attitudes or behaviors. Jaeger’s and Hardy’s essays both deal with works that expand the field of energy surrounding a charismatic individual – be it Francis of Assisi or the king-emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg (reigned 1411-37) – thus inspiring devoted, loyal, and enduring followings. A trio of essays examines aspects of church architecture, sculpture, and furnishings that have the effect of intensifying lay devotion. In Ackley’s, recurrent opening of winged altar-pieces to reveal tiers of gilded figural reliquaries draws the laity to an experience of a higher plane, inspiring them both to worship and to give. In Gustafson’s, the order of architectural space in Franciscan churches shepherds both the faithful and the friars into a single praying body, thus also granting the laity the experience of a realm apart from their ordinary lives. In Binski’s, the wondrous surfaces of Gothic art also impel viewers to strengthen the church with gifts. In another group of essays, charismatic art elevates its viewers by nurturing virtue or refined habits of mind: Jung’s Wise and Foolish Virgins positioned at a portal to the Magdeburg Cathedral inspire repentance as churchgoers enter and empathy as they depart. Egorov’s figures of the Nine Worthies model virtuous civic leadership among burgomasters. McCulloch’s automata reward curiosity among theatergoers. Choniates’s statuary, discussed in Chatterjee’s essay, at once calls forth and ennobles the educated sensibilities of the citizens of Constantinople. To the extent that Choniates arouses disgust in readers toward the Latins, he also demonstrates that the purported charisma of art may be used for divisive purposes. While in Chatterjee’s essay this dark side of charisma is implicit, other essays address negative charismatic effects explicitly, all of which have to do with improprieties of gazing that a charismatic work of art may compel, whether it be a work of statuary, as in Romig’s essay, or a spectacle of misogynistic revenge, as in Richardson’s.

While it is possible to document that all of the works of art examined in these essays had the primary charismatic effect of generating a robust audience response, the particular nuances of that response must, in most cases be

97 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 22 and *passim*.

98 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 180.

inferred. Our authors could not avail themselves of any collections of interviews with medieval viewers and readers to match a volume like *Starlust: The Secret Life of Fans*, which was so useful to Jaeger in *Enchantment* for describing a range of charismatic effects beyond the sheer fact of a work's striking a chord among a large group of people.⁹⁹ Lacking first-person testimonials to these works' effects, our authors take what documentation they have of a work's appeal as a starting point and infer a more nuanced understanding of its charismatic effects by examining the needs, aspirations, or filters its audience would have brought to an encounter with the work. Such considerations of audiences and charismatic effects lay the groundwork for the research that is ultimately of most interest to our contributors: the task of identifying the particular ways that a work of art achieved its charismatic impact.

Modalities

Once the charismatic effect of a work is attested, charismatological analysis necessarily turns to the work of art itself to elucidate the mechanisms by which it produces that effect.¹⁰⁰ Recurrently in Jaeger's work and in the essays collected here, such operative devices effectively redraw and even blur the boundaries between life and art, between presence and representation. The representational mode of charismatic art focuses on reality by way of mimesis and then casts a glow on it – makes it more real than real – through its use of hyper-mimesis. Even while positing that the charisma of texts and objects originates in the living bodies they represent in this mimetic-hyper-mimetic mode, our contributors also advance the idea that the charismatic flow may at times run in the opposite direction: that is, the force of enchantment may spring from a work of art and flow toward the living person it represents.¹⁰¹ For instance, texts and images referring to Sigismund, discussed in Hardy's essay, enlivened his persona, the personal image he projected. Hardy's essay as well as Romig's and Egorov's thus demonstrate that a central task of charismatology is to apprehend the circulation of charismatic forces among individuals, texts, and objects. As for the channeling of that force, the studies gathered here demonstrate the ways that narrative, ekphrasis, commensurability, sculptural technique, non-figural materials (gold, silver, gems), technological expertise, and audience participation may all be modes that mediate the flow of charisma, thus also serving as conduits of charismatic power.

99 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 15-18.

100 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 31.

101 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 134-36, 160-61 discussing the ways that charismatic art can compete with its models and with nature.

Given the importance of mimesis for charismatic art, one might assume that cleverly mechanized statuary would be its highest form. McCulloch's essay on automata argues otherwise, though. As crafted entities that parodied life rather than actually being lifelike, automata tended to arouse beholders' curiosity. In McCulloch's argument, the mystique surrounding wondrous animation produced a fascination with the technological substructure of this phenomenon. Mystique alone would produce unintelligibility, which in turn would disenchant. Disenchantment, in McCulloch's analysis, was not a matter of demystification but of an obfuscating esotericism that prevented appreciation of technological wonder. Similarly, Egorov's study of the statues of the Worthies, and Binski's exegesis of Alfred Gell's enchantment of technology¹⁰² suggest that viewers' apprehension of the mechanical achievements responsible for amazing phenomena actually contributed to the force of their impact rather than detracting from it. It was not their eerie identity with life that made moving statues fascinating, but rather an appeal based upon the audience's complicity in acknowledging the mechanical expertise capable of transforming inertia into movement. In such cases, art is rendered charismatic by a particular type of reception that derived from a critical appreciation of facture. As Binski argues, and as Jaeger shows in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), technology (or rhetoric) can mediate artistic effects to produce responses that range from overriding emotions to critical judgments. At the same time, to the extent that they provoke excitement, curiosity, and a thirst to know and to understand the nature of the prodigy, works of technological virtuosity stand as cases that prove by contrast that what sets charismatic art apart from fascinating art is its projection of *lifelikeness*, whether veristic or idealized – mimetic or hyper-mimetic – inspiring audiences' veneration and dreams of self-improvement through imitation. However, for Binski, who challenges the notion of charismatic art, the attractive beauty of the sinuous and insinuating forms of Gothic statues is a technique deployed to engineer thinking. Their gestural bodies are rhetorical, not mimetic; they persuade but they do not represent. This is a point also made by McCulloch. Binski and McCulloch thus complicate both Jaeger's concept of charismatic art as essentially mimetic and his notion that the characteristic response to it is emotional and imitative.

While most of the volume's essays touch in some way on mimesis, Ackley's and Jung's essays deal most directly with issues of mimesis and hyper-mimesis.

102 Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment," pp. 40-63.

Jung comments upon the trajectory of mimesis in medieval sculpture, from its absence in the early Middle Ages when statues were associated with real bodies (reliquaries, tomb effigies) to the emergence of a statuary art no longer affiliated with dead bodies that endeavored to simulate the movements and beauty of the living. Ackley's analysis of late medieval, German figural reliquary statuettes in polychrome wood and precious metal shows that mimesis of the living could occur in the context of relics. Jung is sensitive to the context of mimetic representation, while Ackley points out that mimesis operates along a spectrum, with its processes modulated by the very mediation of the materials a statue might contain (relics), and by those used (metal, wood) in their making.

Both Jung and Ackley thus introduce variables within the concept and practice of mimesis, and explore their implications for charismatic art. The overarching question motivating Ackley's piece stems from Jaeger's argument that the power of Christian icons is seated in their simultaneous representation of a saint's human and divine qualities: the human in individualistic portraiture, the divine in hyper-mimetic focal points, such as large, dark eyes that seem to gaze directly at the viewer.¹⁰³ Given an icon's two targets of mimesis, Ackley asks, what is the role of medium in representing relatively more of either a saint's human or divine qualities? And what are the effects of this balance on the image's charisma? To answer these questions, Ackley presents two late medieval figural reliquaries: one in polychrome wood, the other in hammered silver and gilded except for the figure's skin. He argues that the materials of these reliquaries regulated their mimetic and hyper-mimetic display, thereby heightening the humanity of one and humanizing the divinity of the other. In her comparative study of Gothic statues of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, Jung finds two forms of mimesis. In most instances of this statuary motif, mimetic renderings of the Foolish Virgins' courtly attire and ungraceful or flirtatious gesticulations make a strong visual contrast with the serene body language and demure accouterments of the Wise, thus prompting viewers to make moral judgments about the contrasting behavior of the two groups. The Wise and Foolish Virgins at the Cathedral of Magdeburg, however, display a sartorial consistency, all modeling a seductive elegance; they are distinguished only by facial expressions of inner emotions: the faces of the Wise evoke progressive contentment while the foolish visages crumble by degrees into despair. By eschewing the representation of proper and foolish behavior by means of a figural mimesis internal to their group and instead focusing on facial expressions, these statues create empathy in viewers for those virgins denied entry

103 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 111-13.

into heaven. It is through identification with the pain of damnation that beholders may form a desire to avoid it by reforming their own lives. The effect of such charismatic art rests upon a two-tiered mimesis, which first stresses similarity among all the Virgins, leading onlookers to ponder the causes of joy and sorrow, and then steers them toward a personal mimetic experience, an identification with the suffering women and an imitation of their penitential mode. Jung concludes that the mimesis at work in Magdeburg's statues of the Wise and Foolish Virgins imparted their charismatic message less with didacticism than with the inspiration to cultivate empathy, an important aspect of 13th-century spirituality.

While both Jung and Ackley thus explore the variations of sculptural mimesis in the production of charismatic art, Romig, Jaeger, and Hardy undertake analogous investigations with respect to narrative mimesis. Jaeger argues in this volume that the sensational rhetoric and fabulous episodes of biographies, which make the subject come alive for readers, work charismatically because of their commensurability with that person's actions and attitudes toward the world, as related by his contemporaries. In the case of St. Francis, humility, charity, courage, mildness in overpowering violence, are all attested, and thus authentic. When the same qualities are depicted in tales of Francis that would seem inauthentic because they strain credulity – such as the fable of the Wolf of Gubio – they come across instead as hyper-authentic, or hyper-mimetic. In the case of Charlemagne, as Romig shows, the qualities of leadership, patronage, and effective imperial authority that are conveyed in his biography are all congruent with the testimony of multiple sources and thus have the ring of authenticity. Similarly, Hardy demonstrates that the noble guise, extravagant generosity, and golden tongue attributed to Sigismund in texts and images originating at his court are consistent, though idealized, with the writings of contemporary chroniclers. In these essays, a charismatological reading of texts has epistemological consequences since it provides a solution for the difficult task of separating the legendary from the historical in hagiographic and biographical writing. Moreover, these charismatological analyses reveal that charismatic biographies do not so much infuse words with the power of their referents, replacing presence with representation, but rather render moot the impossible ideal of real presence since, as these analyses show, charismatic individuals are actually fictions both in their own lives and in their constructed legends. In life as in legend they are representations, actors of their own attributed virtues and status.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps therein lies the source of their charisma: an alluring capacity for self-fashioning. It becomes problematic, then, to return to

104 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 23-24.

the received wisdom, which holds that hagiographers and biographers devised stories in order to revivify their protagonists since in fact these writers were expanding upon what was already a representation, sustaining its reality by a hyper-mimetic representational process. So it appears that two modes of representation are at work in charismatic biographies. Charismatic art mediates a fictional subject, replicating its representational performance.¹⁰⁵

If biographies may transmit charisma of person, what about a charismatic person's own writing? May it also transmit charisma, or act as a charismatic text? Jaeger remarks in his essay for this volume that Bernard's recorded *vita* radiated little if any charisma. His life as represented did not fire up the imagination because, as in a comparison with George H.W. Bush made by Jaeger, the stories told about him, however impressive, were just history, not the stuff of myth-making that instigates emulation. Yet, there were two ways in which Bernard was charismatic: he preached, and he wrote, thereby igniting the devotional ardor of his audiences and propelling multitudes onto the path of crusaders. Bernard's theological writings have been inspirational to a large audience over the *longue durée*. Bernard's charisma, it seems, was only projected when personally presented by him. Only he, not his biographers' representations, could infuse words with his personality.¹⁰⁶ The ongoing impact of Bernard's writings thus raises interesting questions about their discursive nature. Have these texts worked charismatically, by indexing Bernard's very being, so that readers perceived them as seamless emanations of his vital, authorial, self? If so, unlike those of his biographer, Bernard's writings do not *represent* him; rather, they *stand for* him. The force of Bernard's personality is present in the force of his rhetoric. Bernard's ideas and religious sentiments inserted themselves vitally into his writing, offering captivating models of behavior, by virtue of his style and technique. Thus Jaeger's argument that Bernard's charismatic writings, though rooted in the individual living body, were significantly mediated by technique, shares the perspectives Binski and McCulloch advance in this volume about the ways art acts upon its viewers.

To the role of technique in mediating the agency and, or, the charisma of art, Binski, Chatterjee, Romig, and Hardy add that of contextual knowledge. Binski

105 Parenthetically, the constructed aspect of charismatic persons is nowhere more evident than in the Franciscan notion of such persons as recipients of a spiritual gift that enabled them to reach spiritual unification with God, See Gustafson's essay and the section Charisma: A Face-Lift in this introduction.

106 Jaeger develops this point in *Enchantment*, pp. 144-46, and in his "Bernhard von Clairvaux: Charisma und Exemplarität," in *Exemplaris imago: Ideale in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Nicholas Staubach (Frankfurt, 2012), pp. 119-35.

brings up the tomb effigy (c.1290) of King Henry III of England and a 14th-century statue of Charlemagne (at Aachen), both strikingly beautiful. He doubts, however, that viewers would see beauty – let alone charisma – in both given their knowledge, mediated by independent texts, that Charlemagne was a model emperor while Henry III was a failure. Chatterjee makes a similar argument in her analysis of ekphrastic descriptions by the Byzantine poet Choniates. The ancient statues of Byzantium come to life by the means of such ekphrasis, but they lent themselves to ekphrastic treatment because they were already alive with the aura of their accumulated history, of which their educated viewers were well aware. Choniates's reference to Helen of Troy, for instance, blurs the differences between the statue and the historical character as known by beholders. Romig and Hardy both consider iconographic representations of rulers whose charisma was generally acknowledged, focusing in particular on Dürer's portraits of Charlemagne and Sigismund commissioned by the city of Nuremberg. It is noteworthy that, although both figures in this diptych stand for archetypal emperors, Charlemagne's image is idealized (hyper-mimetic) whereas Sigismund's is based on a physiognomic portrait (mimetic). Sigismund remains a historical figure but Charlemagne seems larger than history. Yet as bearers of imperial insignia, both compel the gaze, illustrating what Binski in his essay calls the contextual and insufficient nature of medieval art.¹⁰⁷

While Weber asserted the role of charisma in buttressing authoritative rulership, he opposed the idea of charisma as a feature of governmental institutions, locating charisma in the ruler's personality.¹⁰⁸ In conveying the personalities of Charlemagne and Sigismund, however, Dürer makes use of material and official symbols: that is, the trappings of these rulers' governmental institutions. Picking up on the implications of Dürer's painterly choices, Hardy develops an appreciation of the charisma of authoritative institutions, seeing its output – in the form of documents, seals, livery badges – as capable of animating the idea of empire among independent local power centers of the late medieval Holy Roman Empire. Sigismund's subjects responded both to his living personality, and to the texts and objects that, diffused by his administration, bore his name or image. Charismatic art, in this way, extends active

107 The inscriptions continuing even around and in the back of the portraits refer to the annual public display of the imperial insignia, which were kept in Nuremberg, in a cabinet for which these portraits may possibly have served as covers, Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 149-51.

108 Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Roth and Wittich, p. 244. For Weber's discussion of the "routinization of charisma," see pp. 246-54.

rule throughout an extensive and diffuse political space, and does so by conjuring the enthusiastic support of local elites and governments, keen to secure imperial privileges sealed in gold with the imperial image, with the effect that they acknowledged the legitimate hegemony of imperial rule.

One may well wonder if the golden seals so eagerly commissioned and then preserved by German corporate bodies were seen as invested with some protective, talismanic powers. In the *Tale of Jonathas* written by Hoccleve and here analyzed by Richardson, three such objects inherited by the titular Jonathas set his tale's charismatic power in motion: a ring that will get the wearer everyone's love, a brooch that will bring the wearer everything he wants, and a carpet that will take whoever sits on it wherever he wants to go. With the powers of the ring and brooch in particular, one might imagine Jonathas as being possessed of such charismatic traits as the magnetism of Charlemagne, the imperial authority of Sigismund, the generosity of St. Francis, or the good looks and appealing voice that were signs of *charis* among the ancient Greeks. As it turns out, Jonathas's gifts are only magical objects – not *charis* at all – and only isolate Jonathas from the world of actual human relations, triggering a narrative that ultimately leads to a horrific act of revenge. In Richardson's analysis, however, this same narrative presents perhaps the most complex operation of hyper-mimesis examined in this volume, for as he argues, Jonathas's story works as a hyper-mimetic reflection of the famously troubled Hoccleve himself and thus – in the act of his translating it from the Latin – relieves him of his personal demons and offers him a redemptive path to “translating” himself back into society.

While Richardson sees Hoccleve as both the author and audience for the charisma of his *Tale of Jonathas*, Gustafson finds the lay worshipers in 13th-century central Italian Franciscan churches playing a similar role, also reminiscent of audience participation in Sigismund's administrative output, this time in the production of charismatic space. With the very idea of charismatic space, we would seem to be a long way from Ackley's and Jung's sculptural works, whose charisma flowed so directly from their imitation of human forms. However, recalling that the charisma of those works was also a function of their locations – the winged altarpieces of Ackley's figural reliquaries, the cathedral portal of Jung's Virgins – we may recognize that those locations became zones of charisma themselves, the charged places of viewers' worshipful transport or moral transformation. In the same way, we may recognize that Choniates's descriptions of Constantinople's statuary define the city and its appreciative dwellers before its invasion by the barbaric Latins as a charismatic space. The only iconographic representation in Gustafson's Franciscan space is a crucifix, but the more living works of art it houses are the members

of the Franciscan Order themselves, who model their lives after the example of the charismatic St. Francis. By choreographing the movements of the faithful in the church, first through the nave, then through a narrow door in the *tramezzo* screen into a space just adjacent to the intimate space of the friars' choir, the design of Italian Franciscan churches responded to the laity's desire to participate in the mystic process of ascent to intimacy with God as envisioned and practiced by the Franciscans, thereby partaking of the gifts of holiness – the *charismata* as Bonaventure called them. In this way, the charisma both of Franciscan churches and of Sigismund's seals and documents had a living fabric, one infused less with mimetic or hyper-mimetic representations of leaders – whether Francis or Sigismund – than with the participation of living audiences whose physical role in the staging of liturgical events or the creation of documents was both constitutive of their charisma and essential for the higher status the same audience-creators derived from them.

Charisma. A Face-Lift

The charismatological analyses of audience and reception, effects, and operational modes advanced in this volume often identify the human visage as a radiant locus of charisma, emitting magnetism or a secretive ambiguity that keeps viewers at some distance. Our title for the present volume advertises the special relationship between charisma and visages, while also indicating our hope to contribute to Jaeger's extraordinary project of giving charisma a face-lift, in multiple senses. In applying the concept to art, Jaeger gives charisma a face-lift in the sense of a makeover, one that entails its own methodology – charismatology – just as there is an art and science to cosmetic surgery. Jaeger's project also gives charisma a face-lift in that it lifts the charismatic face – be it the compelling face of an icon or the *sur*-face of an inspiring biography – to investigate the anatomy and physiology of its glow.

In our authors' furtherance of this investigation, historical contexts emerge as a significant component of charisma. In his essay, Binski emphasizes that backstories count. Martino Rossi Monti's essay makes clear that the notion, understanding, and terminology of charisma all have a history. In classical times and Late Antiquity, the concept of charisma was deployed to designate exceptional individuals and to note their endowment with special qualities. A charismatic person had a beautiful soul, which was reflected in his body. Physical beauty could thus be seen as a sign of divine favor and so, instrumental in winning the favor of others. Charisma implied mutuality between body and soul, between beauty and virtue or, at least recognition of the body's role as a medium for the expression of grace and consequent powers that rendered individuals thus endowed magnetic to their audiences. In the growing Christian

context, charisma became identified as a gift of divine grace, often but not exclusively associated with prophecy, a connection, as we have seen, that underlies the Weberian and Jaegerian understanding of charisma as a relational phenomenon between person, art, and audience. Gustafson's reading of the *Breviloquium* by the Franciscan Bonaventure, however, exposes aspects of medieval charisma that insisted on the individual and inner-oriented character of grace. For Bonaventure, charisma as a gift of grace works from within, directing the ascension of the Christian soul toward God. According to this understanding, a charismatic person results from the blessing of charismatic grace combined with his or her own personal effort to achieve spiritual unity with the divine. Thus, charismatic individuals are works of art themselves in Jaeger's felicitous formulation,¹⁰⁹ but their art-self has become an end in itself, a part of the universal being. This scenario, however, leaves space for an intermediary type of charisma, animated by Francis's notion of exemplarity, and articulated through the architectural design of Franciscan churches. The Franciscan ideal of providing models and methods for approaching intimacy with God permits us to understand that even though charisma of person has outward-facing effects, it may spring from a person's inner-oriented, gift-assisted growth. Such an understanding of charisma emerges from a careful reading of medieval sources on the topic and stands as just one demonstration of the importance of using modern definitions of charismatic force with care so as not to obscure the medieval experience.

Relatively absent from this volume are reflections on gender and charisma. Franciscans did not prohibit women from moving through charismatic space, but Hoccleve and his character Jonathas relate to women as negative charismatic figures. The walls of town halls featured the figures of the Nine Worthies but not of their female companions, the Nine Female Worthies. Charismatic representations of historical and secular personages tend to be males, while compelling images of biblical and religious individuals such as those examined by Jung tend to represent women. How might a study of gender and charisma help us deepen our understanding of their roles in medieval society?

Other arguments presented in this volume consider the negative aspects of charisma of art and thus challenge Jaeger's tendency to speak of charisma of art as positive by definition. If the effects of a work of art are not ennobling then its allure ought to be given another term, such as seductive or fascinating. Certainly such a boundary has not been drawn for charisma of person – Hitler being a primary example of negative charisma – should art also be considered

109 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 26 and *passim*.

capable of having a force for ill?¹¹⁰ Several essays find medieval authors considering this question. Romig's Strabo, in his *De imagine Tetrici*, staged a charisma whose attractiveness he derided and resisted on the grounds that the material stuff of images cannot convey special power. To this deceptive charisma, Strabo contrasted the properly charismatic art of writing, exemplified by Einhard's biography of Charlemagne. Carolingian intellectuals trusted the charisma of words, but not of images. Conversely, Chatterjee's Choniates, writing in the aftermath of the destruction of Constantinople by Latin crusaders, warned against words, encouraging viewers to let themselves be seduced by images, though not all images. Choniates's ekphrasis praised ancient statuary, but not Christian icons. Richardson's Hoccleve worried about the hate-mongering misogyny of the tale he was about to translate. All of these authors implicitly raise further questions: could charisma be controlled, directed? And what would it mean for a medieval writer to try to do so?

Perhaps the question that is most often raised in this volume has to do with the locus of charisma. The arc described by Weberian and Jaegerian scholarship enlarges that locus to include art and literature as well as human beings. Several authors in this volume contribute to this expansive project by identifying cases in which the medieval record itself explicitly locates charisma in works of art. Ackley notes, for instance, that Bernard of Clairvaux's biographer, wishing to convey the living image of Bernard's radiant body produced a description that calls to mind a figural reliquary executed in precious metal. The indwelling charisma of a work of art would also be indicated by its inspiring its own following in the form of similar works of art, which is what Egorov finds in the case of the Nine Worthies sculptural motif. As we have already mentioned, an effect of these figures was to inspire city councilors to lead a civic life of high ideals, but that was not the only impact the images of the Worthies had: they also inspired the making of other images, modeling artistic formulae of grandeur and dignity. Moreover, when the burgomasters of Lüneburg decided to commission their portraits, the resulting stained-glass depictions were couched in the iconographic vocabulary of the Nine Worthies. An instance of the flow of charisma moving from art to person, here living persons sought to infuse their own being with the charisma of the Worthies' *images*. The charisma of the burgomasters was derived from the particular material presence of the Worthies, mediated by a mimesis linking the portraits of the Worthies and those of the burgomasters. Charismatic art had itself become a model, less a representation than a persuasive formula for a communal audience eager to be

110 On these questions, see also the opening of our discussion of charismatic effects above, p. 24 and notes 97-98.

governed by a charismatic leadership. Similarly, as Jung shows, the figural art of late Gothic sculpture offered to the living, “in a kind of feedback loop,”¹¹¹ models of spiritual excellence, worth imitating to achieve moral distinction. For their part, Hardy and Gustafson suggest that the locus of charisma might be further extended, from human leaders through art to the viewers themselves, for audiences too may generate charisma, not only by adhering to persuasive leaders (the traditional argument) but also by their own participation in the production of charismatic art.

In its consideration of the locus of charisma, our volume hosts a ghost that challenges our very project. The ghost of a question that acquires a shadowy presence in Binski’s essay, where the author contends that for art to have the effects of a living charismatic person, it needs an injection of aura, of an independent critical judgement and appreciation. Art must needs have charisma bestowed upon it. Binski insists on an unbridgeable ontological gap between life and art: artifacts cannot see, behave, or have intentions. Such a statement seems self-evident, yet challenging voices have arisen from the fields of anthropology, archaeology, and material culture studies.¹¹² That intentionality is a human trait is not in question, but it is a trait that is pre-disciplined by and executed within the cultural and material environment in which human beings are situated. Charisma, as a particular form of agency, invites a reconsideration of the traditionally unassailable distinction, so dear to western thought, between things and people. In many instances of the relationships between charisma and art presented in this volume, the charisma of art cannot simply be reduced to being an effect of its mimetic connection with human life. Nor does the critical role played by artifacts in the circulation of charisma appear to have been unilaterally conferred by particular human protagonists. For were that the case, how would we explain unwelcome surpluses of charismatic art, the impact of its materials and techniques, or the unsettling hybridity of automata?

111 Jung, “Compassion as Moral Virtue: Another Look at the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Gothic Sculpture,” p. 78.

112 See above at notes 84, 87-90. Among a vast and growing literature, the two following surveys are useful: Gell, *Art and Agency*; Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Construire la culture matérielle* (Paris, 1999), and Carl Knappett, *Thinking through Material Culture*; C. Knappett and Lambros Malafouris, eds., *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach* (New York, 2008).

The Volume

In the first section of the present volume, “Medieval and Modern: The Hermeneutics of Charisma,” contributors embed their interpretation of terminology (*charis*), cathedral statuary (Magdeburg), and English Gothic within historical, theoretical, and methodological perspectives on the study of charisma and art. In his essay, “The Mask of Grace: On Body and Beauty of Soul between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” Martino Rossi Monti traces the development of the concept of *charis* (grace) from its attestations in Homeric poetry to its manifestations in ancient Roman culture under the term *gratia* to its adoption by Christian hagiographers. As Rossi Monti shows, this history is one of a gradual evaporation of *charis* from the body. Though always understood to be god-given, *charis* was first considered a wholly embodied quality, recognizable in such traits as a beautiful physique and an appealing voice. Beginning with Plato, however, a parallel tradition held *charis* to be a function of the beautiful soul instead, a quality that radiated through the body even as it was a force unto itself. Early Christian hagiographers took this dualistic understanding of *charis* further: for them the radiance of *charis* originated in neither the body nor the gifted soul but rather in the soul’s surrender to Christ. In a paradoxical last stage of this rarefication of *charis*, hagiographers see only the brilliance of divine *charis* in their saintly subjects, and their physical characteristics disappear behind what Rossi Monti calls “the mask of grace.”

In “Compassion as Moral Virtue: Another Look at the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Gothic Sculpture,” Jacqueline E. Jung glosses Jaeger’s analysis of the statues of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the west facade of Strasbourg Cathedral (end of 13th century)¹¹³ by considering the slightly earlier rendering of the Wise and Foolish Virgins at Magdeburg Cathedral (c.1250). Jung argues that in the Magdeburg group interior emotional states were, for the first time, externalized in the Virgins’ bodies which, dazzlingly carved, expressed joy and sadness even as they masked the moral conditions that had inspired the Virgins’ attitudes. Whether foolish or wise, the Virgins resemble each other, compelling viewers to bask in their youth and loveliness, and also to consider self-reform channeled by empathy with the sad beauties who had preferred human praise to a good conscience.

In his “Charisma and Material Culture,” Paul Binski considers the concept of charismatic art in the course of critically engaging with Alfred Gell’s notion of the enchanting power of technology. Binski attributes to the curvilinear bodies and wondrous, insinuating surfaces of 14th-century British art, exemplified by

113 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, pp. 331-48; and *Enchantment*, pp. 150-59.

the Lady Chapel at Ely (c.1320), a persuasive capacity and especially the power to convince beholders to practice charitable gift-giving. Rendered effective by virtuoso facture, this art, without expressing psychological states, seeks to guide its audience along a thinking, utilitarian path. For Binski, the agency of art is “causal and social,”¹¹⁴ and highly contingent upon an enabling contextual network of ethics, aesthetics, meaning, and experience. Extending beyond the specific case of English Gothic art, Binski probes the extent to which charisma, as a form of agency, inherently animates artifacts. He concludes that charisma is a quality bestowed upon art by human consciousness.

The second section of the volume, “Charismatic Art,” considers instances of charisma as a function of representation. Andrew Roming’s “Charismatic Art and Biography in the Carolingian World” analyzes a reflection in Walahfrid Strabo’s poem *De imagine Tetrici* (829) upon what constitutes good and bad charismatic art. The poem warns against the statue of the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great (d. 526), which Charlemagne had brought from Ravenna and installed in Aachen, denouncing its idolatrous quality and its power to lead viewers astray, and reproaching Charlemagne for being seduced by its false charms. Romig stresses that few images of Charlemagne himself circulated in his lifetime (a situation that dramatically reversed after his death), which paralleled his court’s iconophobia evident in the *Opus Caroli Regis (Libri Carolini)*. Romig submits that such distrust of images may account for the revival of secular biography at that time (exemplified by Einhard), based on the Augustinian notion that words provided a truthful medium for conveying charismatic representations of rulership.

In his essay “The Saint’s Life as a Charismatic Form: Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi,” Jaeger asserts that the publication history of Francis’s biographies together with the novels and films they have inspired evince the charisma of his life story. Acknowledging that some episodes in Francis’s biographies appear patently untrue, Jaeger argues that they comprise the essence of his enduring legacy nevertheless. Moreover, he finds a kind of truth in the fables of Francis in the form of their commensurability with the narrative arc they share: the story of a humble, gentle, and courageous person who succeeds in not only overcoming dangerous and powerful foes but also in winning them over. This is the “real” Francis, Jaeger argues: the character whose story is conveyed in plausible and implausible episodes alike. By contrast, the sole major biography of Bernard of Clairvaux portrays him as unapproachable in his holiness, lacking, in other words, a basic element of charisma, that it inspires

114 Binski, “Charisma and Material Culture,” p. 131.

imitation. And yet, as Jaeger points out, Bernard is posthumously charismatic, thanks to his own writing, rather than to writing about him by others.

In this section's final essay, "Charismatic Rulers in Civic Guise: Images of the Nine Worthies in Northern European Town Halls of the 14th to 16th Centuries," Andrey Egorov traces the power these effigies had to create spaces of exhortation where civic leaders were inspired to live according to the highest ideals of good government in Cologne, Mechelen, and Lüneburg. The topos of the Nine Worthies had originated in aristocratic culture, and Egorov argues that its surprising appeal for urban magistrates, who typically attained their dominance by challenging claims of local lords, lay in the charisma of the Nine Worthies' material presence ensconced in town halls. Highly individualized figures positioned within broader iconographic programs that exemplified ancient and biblical justice, The Nine Worthies portrayed a history of good governance and materialized an imaginary genealogy of forefathers. Corporeal and mimetic as sculpture, numinous as stain glass, the Worthies enveloped the council members in the aura of their representational idiom. The Worthies and the magistrates formed a single auratic body of exemplary individuals.

The third section of the volume, "Dazzling Reflections: Charismatic Art and Its Audience," features essays that explore the charisma of art that offers viewers inspiring or redemptive reflections of themselves or that transmit ennobling reflections of themselves to others. Paroma Chatterjee's essay, "Charisma and the Ideal Viewer in Nicetas Choniates's *De signis*," studies the contrast Choniates (d. 1217) makes between Constantinople as a zone of historical and aesthetic consciousness owing to the beauty of its statuary and its appreciative Byzantine viewers, and the Constantinople that was brutally sacked in 1204 by marauding Latins unmoved by the charismatic power of those same public sculptures. Her close reading of Choniates's descriptions of Constantinople's life-like statues in the *De signis* elicits the Byzantine author's view that works of art function according to a principle of reciprocity, whereby individuals and cultures receive a measure of grace for their appropriate response to them. Chatterjee further examines the ways in which Choniates's reflections shaped viewers' ability to perceive and respond to this grace as an index of cultural characteristics and as a critical tool for investigating aesthetic and political trends.

Gavin Richardson's "Disenchantment: Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* and Male Revenge Fantasy," focuses on the Middle English translation of the extremely popular story of Jonathas by Thomas Hoccleve (c.1368-1426), which Richardson classifies as a male revenge fantasy: that is, a tale in which a male lover wreaks usually violent and sexualized revenge on a woman by whom he feels himself to have been shamed. As Richardson shows, Hoccleve's example of the genre

makes for an elegant case study of disenchantment – what happens when a charismatic object is withdrawn – and of the virulent misogyny that emerges when the object is (or was) a female lover. The essay concludes with a suggestion that in the light of his bouts of madness, Hoccleve may have found a reflection of himself in the dark charisma of Jonathas's life story, a reflection that may have served as a "writing cure."

The final essay in this section, "The Emperorship of Sigismund of Luxemburg (1368-1437): Charisma and Government in the Later Medieval Holy Roman Empire," by Duncan Hardy, centers on the eventful career of the emperor by considering the narrative and visual evidence of his energetic personality's broad and transformative impact on the European political landscape. As Hardy shows, Sigismund's energy was effectively relayed and transmitted by such various institutional media as seals, documents, livery badges, and portraits. To explain the scope of the emperor's influential outreach, Duncan deploys the notion of charisma as an integrative force. Personally and institutionally projected by the monarch, promoted and perpetuated by admiration for and memory of a respected ruler, such charisma durably constructed and united an imaginary political community. Hardy therefore contends that charismatic leadership was a prominent operator in late medieval politics, challenging Weber's notion that European governmental structures were antithetical to the exercise of charismatic rulership.

The fourth and final section of the volume, "Mediation: The Intermediary Spaces of Charisma," includes essays that provide a perspective on realms intermediate between art and life that the charisma of art may call into being. Together these essays contribute to our understanding of charismatic art as capable of generating an enhanced environment, either secular or sacred.

In his essay "Medieval Franciscan Architecture as Charismatic Space," Eric Gustafson explores the agency of architecture in 13th-century central Italian Franciscan churches in leading lay people – both men and women – into a realm that inspires, feeds, and confirms a desire to draw nearer to God both within the church and in their daily lives. The partitioning of the church interior into three spaces is key to the creation of this charismatic space: in particular, the division between the nave and the lay choir, by means of the *tramezzo* screen. Upon entering the church, a worshiper would be drawn forward by the sight of the door in the middle of this screen and by the crucifix above it. In passing through the door, a layperson would find him or herself in an intermediary space that corresponds, Gustafson argues, to the second of three levels of ascent to the divine articulated by Franciscan theologian Bonaventure (1221-74) in his *Breviloquium*. At this stage, the Christian's ascent is supported by the gifts of the Holy Spirit – the *charismata*, as Bonaventure

terms them – and inspired by the life of Christ. Considered in relation to this second stage of Christian practice, the unique space of the Franciscan lay choir may be considered in itself a gift of grace.

Joseph Ackley's essay, "Precious-Metal Figural Sculpture, Medium, and Mimesis in the Late Middle Ages," examines two northern-European figural reliquaries that together define a polarity between mimesis and hyper-mimesis. The first is a bust of a radiant and rosy-cheeked Catherine of Alexandria in polychrome wood (produced in Germany around 1465-67). The second is a mid-14th century German Virgin and Child statuette in hammered silver, gilded except for the figures' skin. This second object would seem to be much less mimetic than the first; however, Ackley suggests that of the two, the precious-metal Virgin and Child figure might provide the stronger likeness of divinity, for it accurately pictures the radiance of saintly bodies, which Bernard of Clairvaux had compared to the luminosity of sunlight shining on silver or gold. Ackley's further discussion of the winged altar piece, the site in which the gilt of both polychrome wood and precious-metal figural reliquaries would have been viewed by medieval Christians, situates both objects as a part a drama of technological brilliance, which functioned both to fill viewers with reverential awe and to inspire them to participate in the church's financial support.

In the final essay in this section, "I'll make the statue move indeed: Charismatic Motion and the Disenchanted Image in Early Modern Drama,"¹¹⁵ Lynsey McCulloch traces the material presence and literary motif of animated statues in early modern culture, arguing that their auratic appeal was informed less by their esoteric than by their exoteric features, in particular their intelligibility. As McCulloch points out, early modern audiences were quite familiar with automata. They were featured in the theater as both devices and characters (Hermione in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, Robert Greene's *Brazen Head*); they adorned pageants and urban buildings; they were incorporated into Catholic church services – and exposed as tricks by Protestant Reformers – and they loomed large in contemporary scientific and philosophical treatises. While the latter provided explanations of self-moving devices that ranged from the natural to the supernatural, the other media did not elucidate the origins of sculptural motion. Spectators and readers were thus presented with the choice of being enchanted by the supernatural, by the technological, or by both since, as McCulloch shows, an understanding of technical ingenuity did not necessarily limit the sense of wonder inspired by mysteriously moving objects.

115 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, v.iii.88, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford, 1996).

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PART 1

*Medieval and Modern: The Hermeneutics of
Charisma*



The Mask of Grace: On Body and Beauty of Soul between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages

Martino Rossi Monti

1 The Gift of Grace

‘Charisma’ is a word with a peculiar history. Risen to prominence as a theological term in the 1st century AD thanks to the apostle Paul and gradually fallen in disuse in the West (at least as a word), it was reinvented as a sociological concept by Max Weber. In Weber, charisma denoted a form of *authority*, and was defined as a (real or imagined) extraordinary quality, thought to be supernatural or superhuman in nature, by virtue of which its possessor is treated – on the basis of *faith* rather than reason – as a leader.¹ After Weber, the word has enjoyed an increasing popularity and has been studied as a phenomenon or adopted as a guiding idea by a variety of disciplines stretching from anthropology to neuroscience. In popular usage, charisma has come to denote a mysterious quality or set of qualities that make an individual unique and irresistibly magnetic.

In Paul, however, the term was not specifically connected to authority or leadership, but could indicate the gift of redemption or, more particularly, a number of miraculous and ecstatic gifts (*charismata*), such as prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, or miracle-working, assigned by God’s grace (*charis*)

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1 Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, trans. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1968), p. 48. For the influence of church historian Rudolph Sohm’s analysis of theological charisma on Weber see David N. Smith, “Faith, Reason, and Charisma: Rudolf Sohm, Max Weber, and the Theology of Grace,” *Sociological Inquiry* 68 (1998), 32-60. On the reception of Weber’s concept of charisma in Germany and in the United States, see Joshua Derman, *Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 176-215.

to individual Christians for the benefit of the community.² In the Greco-Roman world, supernatural talents of this kind were considered the privilege of *exceptional* individuals, and Paul, by adopting a new word for them, tried to disentangle them from their association with the realm of magic or with competing religious practices. He also did his best to domesticate them into a *communal* framework: some gifts, admittedly, were higher than others, but each member of the community was entitled to receive one. It is no mystery, however, that by stressing the superiority of the spirit over the law and of the “spiritual” man over the “psychic” one (1 Cor. 2), Paul also nurtured and personally cultivated, to a certain extent, the same aristocratic elitism that, elsewhere, he tried to contain. Even with the institutionalization of the church, the progressive decline of Pauline *charismata* and the replacement of prophets with bishops, this tension never disappeared. In fact, the cult of saints as superhuman individuals whose powers elevated them well *above* the community soon began to flourish: whether as martyrs, solitary ascetics, pastoral administrators or monks, these men and women were venerated as God’s special friends and were thought to possess supernatural powers. Gradually, their status was almost equated to that of Jesus as described in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (7:26): “blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”³

It is precisely with the late antique and medieval representations of these ‘holy’ men that this essay will be concerned. Rather than attempting to trace back a Weberian conception of charisma in the texts of the past, I will focus on the Greek word from which the term charisma derives, namely *charis* (“grace”), and on its Latin counterpart, *gratia*. In particular, I will explore the role of *charis* and *gratia* in a number of literary portraits drawn from late antique and medieval biographies, panegyrics, and hagiographic texts. Out of the large amount of late antique and medieval physical descriptions available, I will focus on those in which the individual portrayed – whether a philosopher, a bishop, a monk, an abbot, a pope, or an emperor – is presented as utterly superior to the average human being. In all such descriptions, despite their different

2 1 Cor. 12:7-12; Rom. 12:6-8. A useful history of the idea of charisma from Paul to Weber and beyond is provided by John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (New York, 2009), who, however, overlooks the importance of charisma in medieval culture: on this, see Ayelet Even-Ezra, “The Conceptualization of Charisma in the Early Thirteenth Century,” *Viator* 44 (2013), 151-68, and the essay by Erik Gustafson in this volume. See also the texts collected in Giancarlo Andenna et al., eds., *Charisma und religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter* (Münster, 2005) and *Il carisma nel secolo XI. Genesi, forme e dinamiche istituzionali* (Negrarine di S. Pietro in Cariano, 2006). On the etymology and history of the word see Claude Moussy, *Gratia et sa famille* (Paris, 1966), pp. 456-59, and the entry in *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Oxford, 1961), pp. 1518-19.

3 Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions* (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 1-5.

epochs, styles and content, a *privileged* relationship between the individual and the deity is implied or explicitly stated, often also on the basis of the grandiose claims made by the individuals themselves. Exceptional beauty and grace are often (but by no means always) presented as evidence of this special relationship, and are understood as a special gift (*charisma*, or *donum*) from God and, depending on the context, as a sign of moral virtue, or nobility of birth or as an overflowing of spiritual beauty.

First of all, however, something must be said about the diversified meanings of grace (*charis*, *gratia*) in the ancient world, since this will help us to understand the late antique transformation undergone by this idea (or group of ideas). In Greek, *charis*⁴ could designate: 1) the *outward* grace and charm of objects, human beings, or gods; 2) a favor or gift done or returned; 3) the kindness of the doer/giver or the gratitude of the receiver; 4) a sense of gratification, delight, or pleasure.⁵ It is widely thought that this last meaning connected and explained all the others: in this sense, *charis* was something that brought joy or pleasure. I will focus on the aesthetic sense of the word, but it is important not to forget its connection with the others: the encounter with beauty was a source of pleasure (visual, psychological, or sexual), but physical beauty was also commonly seen as the mark of divine favor and as a key factor in *winning* the favor of the others.

In the Greeks' aristocratic, male-centered, and ethically-charged conception of human beauty,⁶ *charis* was often associated with youthfulness, warlike strength, imposing size, and flourishing health. It was mostly a quality of *the body*, from which it emanated like a sort of splendor. It was very often the gods (the Graces, Athena, Aphrodite) who temporarily bestowed such special quality on humans, making them irresistible. This gift, however, did not come at random: Odysseus was no ordinary mortal and, after Athena's shedding of grace over him, appeared to Nausicaa as "radiant" with beauty and grace and god-like.⁷ Likewise, Pindar's prize-winning athletes stood out and glowed with divine *charis*. In the case of gods, heroes or kings, *charis* was often combined with a kind of awe-inspiring fearsomeness (*aidos*, *deinotes*), an association

4 On *charis* in the ancient world see Moussy, *Gratia*, pp. 409-73; Bonnie MacLachlan, *The Age of Grace* (Princeton, 1993). On the Greco-Roman benefaction context of *charis* and its influence on Paul's understanding of human and divine grace see James H. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen, 2003).

5 *A Greek-English Lexicon*, eds. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott (1843; rev. ed. Oxford, 1996), pp. 1978-79. Cf. Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étimologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots* (Paris, 1968-80; repr. Paris, 1999), pp. 1247-48.

6 Glenn W. Most, "Schöne (das)," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols., eds. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel, 1971-2007), 8:1343-51.

7 Homer, *Odyssey* 6.232-43. Cf. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3.919-26, 443-44; Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.586-93; 4.150.

that, especially when referred to the gaze, was to enjoy great fortune in later encomiastic descriptions of emperors, holy philosophers, and saints.⁸ In the context of both hetero- and homosexual love, *charis* could also denote the beauty radiating from the body or the eyes of the beloved (with the eyes *literally* emitting rays of light, according to the emissive theory of vision that dominated until modern times). *Charis*'s erotic and spellbinding charm could prove extremely dangerous, especially when feminine beauty was involved (as in the case of Pandora).⁹ However, *charis* was also a property of speech, denoting its charm and pleasantness, and it is no wonder that, in the rhetorical tradition, *charis* came to denote the middle style, whose aim was to "delight." The fine line dividing these ideas from the world of magic and 'fascinations' is hard to miss. Since grace of body and speech was thought to be so irresistible, it can be hardly coincidental that *charis*, by Greco-Roman times, had acquired the status of *vox magica* in the magical papyri and that *charitesion* had become a technical term designating "spells or devices that make the user beautiful or charismatic."¹⁰

It was only during the early Roman imperial period that the Latin *gratia* (and its cognates *gratus* and *gratiosus*) began to acquire an aesthetic sense and to compete with the word *venustas* as a synonym for *charis*. The word quickly gained terrain also among Christian writers, who regularly used *gratia* to translate both theological and aesthetic *charis*.¹¹ It is also important to remember that the Greeks and the Romans used the word grace to denote feminine as well as *masculine* beauty.¹² In the overall, grace as a property often stood for something elusive and non-measurable, a 'plus' capable of rendering beauty irresistible. In a sense, grace could be seen not so much as a quality of the

8 For Odysseus, cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 8.22; for the goddess Demetra and the "eyes of kings," cf. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 214-15. For a late antique example, cf. Ammianus Marcellinus on Emperor Julian's eyes and face in *Res Gestae* 15.8.12: "oculos cum venustate terribiles vultumque excitatus gratum."

9 Hesiod, *Theogony* 585; cf. *Works and Days* 60-82.

10 Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 25, 96-110. For the role of *charis* in the magical papyri see also Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, pp. 90-95.

11 See Moussy, *Gratia*, pp. 417-35. On the Hebrew word for "grace" and its Greek rendering see James A. Montgomery, "Hebrew Heseid and Greek Charis," *The Harvard Theological Review* 32 (1939), 97-102. On the patristic meaning and use of *charis* see *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1514-18.

12 Cf. the contrast between *gratia virilis* and *femineum decus* in Statius, *Silvae* 2.6.41, or the "manly grace" of the emperor Aurelianus in *Historia Augusta: Aurelianus* 6.1: "Fuit decorus ac gratia viriliter speciosus."

object but rather as a *projection* on the object of the emotions it aroused in the viewer¹³ (a similar point could be made about the modern notions of charisma).

As we shall see, roughly in the age of Plotinus, the idea of grace as beauty underwent, especially among Platonists and in some Christian circles, a process of *spiritualization*, and came to denote not so much bodily beauty, but the outward reflection of *inward* beauty and of the divine power inhabiting it. This kind of luminous beautification from the inside was described by Plotinus and later developed by his followers in their biographic descriptions of the Neoplatonic philosophers. Adopting and adapting Platonic ideas, Christian theologians – in Alexandria and especially in Cappadocia – argued that through God’s *charis* the soul could regain its godlike, luminous beauty, which had been obfuscated by the Fall: salvation was understood as a beautification of the soul.¹⁴ The body could partially reflect this inner beauty already in this life, but was to radiate it fully only in the resurrected state. In this sense, the glow of *charis* on a saint’s face was often seen as the outward reflection of the inner workings of God’s grace.¹⁵ These ideas seem to have reached the Latin West through multiple channels (one of them possibly being Ambrose and the Neoplatonic circle of Milan); in this process, as we will see, they gradually intertwined with ideas and traditions quite distant from the Platonic framework.

13 MacLachlan, *The Age of Grace*, p. 149; Valerio Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica* (Bologna, 2004), pp. 63, 76.

14 Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, ed. Richard A. Norris Jr. (Atlanta, 2012), pp. 52-53 (PG 44:792): “When we were sinners and dark, God made us full of light and lovely by shining upon us with his grace (*charin*) ... so when the soul has been transposed from error to truth, the dark form of her life is transformed into radiant beauty (*charin*).” Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, PG 32:109. This imagery is echoed in Thomas Aquinas, *Super sententiis* 4 d. 18 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 1-2 and also in the *Catechismus ex decreto Concilii Tridentini ad parochos* (Lyon, 1567), pp. 180-81.

15 For the grace shining from Moses’s face see Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, PG 44:325; for the God-given grace shining from the dead body of Macrina (Gregory’s sister) see *Life of Macrina*, PG 46:992. See Patricia Cox Miller, “Dreaming the Body: An Aesthetics of Asceticism,” in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford, 1998), pp. 281-300, and cf. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), pp. 293-94.

2 The Holy Philosophers

The religious and aristocratic turn of late antique philosophy has been often pointed out: by the 3rd century AD, philosophy was generally identified with a spiritual search for the supreme deity, and the philosopher was often seen as an all-wise and godlike figure, if not even as a god. The Platonic philosophers, especially after Plotinus, had done much to encourage their own divinization, since they regarded themselves as the one and only pure and “holy succession” of interpreters of Plato’s teachings. This attitude was part of a more general trend, which found expression particularly in the biographical literature dedicated to the so-called “holy men.”¹⁶ In Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’s ‘sacred’ biographies of Pythagoras, or in the *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* of Eunapius (c.345-c.420), rigorous asceticism, magical knowledge, prophetic insight, and superior philosophical contemplation were seen as the distinctive marks of the divine philosopher and had formed an often confused but powerful mixture.¹⁷ These texts had a clear propagandistic and proselytizing aim and must be put in the context of the rivalry between paganism and Christianity.

No wonder that, in this tradition, the physical description of Platonic philosophers took on a fully hagiographical tone. However serene in its classicism, Porphyry’s description of Plotinus in class already provides an example of an ‘illumination from within’ which draws from the same vocabulary that Plotinus had used to describe the supreme deity.¹⁸ In Marinus’s description of Proclus (c.410-85), not only Proclus’s beautiful bodily symmetry corresponded to the harmony of his soul, but “the force of his soul, blooming in his body like a living light, produced an astonishing radiance which is scarcely possible to convey in words.” This radiance was particularly evident in Proclus’s face and eyes: “For his eyes seemed to be filled with a sort of brilliance, and the rest of his visage had a share of divine illumination (*ellampseos theias*).” We should be careful taking these statements simply as metaphors: during one of Proclus’s lectures, Marinus promptly reports, a certain Rufinus saw a “light” playing around the

16 On this, see Garth Fowden, “The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982), 33-59; Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1983). On ancient biography’s ambiguous position between reality and fiction see Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (1971; expanded ed. Cambridge, 1993), pp. 46-47, 99-104. On the interaction and coalescence between biography and panegyric in Late Antiquity see *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, eds. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley, 2000).

17 Fowden, “The Pagan Holy Man,” pp. 36-37.

18 Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus* 13. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.5; 5.5.12, ed. Arthur H. Armstrong, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1966-88).

head of Proclus. Like Plotinus, Proclus was also kindly, but, unlike Plotinus, his gentleness was combined with a touch of fearsomeness. Marinus also specifies that when Proclus spoke he was “under divine inspiration (*theias epipnoias*)” and his words “fell like snow” from his mouth.¹⁹

Even more interestingly, Damascius (480-c.550) presented Isidore’s eyes as imbued with divine *charis* and wisdom, pointing once again to the outward appearance as a gateway to the inside. Isidore’s description, even if slightly more individualized than that of Proclus, appears vague: the style is encomiastic, and only Isidore’s old age and the divine shape of his face are alluded to. Arguably the most important aspect of this description is the fact that Isidore’s sparkling, *grace*-filled eyes were the “true images (*agalmata*) of his soul, and not of the soul alone, but of the divine emanation (*theias aporroes*) dwelling in it,” making him a sort of living manifestation of God.²⁰ In all these portraits, the ‘visibility’ of the soul also emphasizes the philosopher’s domination of and detachment from his body, from which his soul would have been fully freed only at the moment of death.

These ideas were deeply rooted in the Platonic tradition. At some point, Plato’s notion of the beauty of the soul²¹ had been combined with the idea of an ‘irradiation’ of the soul’s beauty to the outside, a beauty that was described as luminous and divine in origin and, at the same time, as the result of a process of moral self-purification. When a “beautiful soul is embedded in a beautiful [male] body,” Maximus of Tyre wrote, it “shines out through what encloses it.”²² This way, a form of mutual correspondence between the inside and the outside was established; this, however, was problematic, since the context was one of – Platonically speaking – ontological *disparity*, if not opposition, between body and soul. In any case, the trend continued with Plotinus, who argued that inward beauty could become outwardly visible – although by no means *entirely* visible – through the “splendor” of “grace” (*charis*).²³ For

19 Marinus, *The Life of Proclus* 3, 16, 23, trans. Mark Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints* (Liverpool 2000), pp. 62, 81–82, 94 (modified). For the Greek text see *Vita Procli*, ed. Jean F. Boissonade (Paris, 1850). On the passage see H.J. Blumenthal, “Marinus’ *Life of Proclus*: Neoplatonist Biography,” *Byzantium* 54 (1984), 483–84. For the simile of the snow cf. Homer, *Iliad*, 3.222; on Proclus’s fearsomeness cf. also Suda, alphaiota 89=Damascius frg. 248 Zintzen.

20 Damascius, *The Life of Isidore* 13, ed. Polimnia Athanassiadi, *Damascius. The Philosophical History* (Athens, 1999), pp. 89–90, modified. Cf. p. 195 (=frg. 75F.3–5).

21 Plato, *Republic* 444d–e; *Symposium* 209b; *Phaedrus* 279b–c.

22 *Oration* 19, no. 2 (cf. 21.7) ed. M.B. Trapp, *The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 170–71.

23 Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.7.22; cf. 2.9.17. Cf. Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. Michael Chase (Chicago, 1998), pp. 49–52; Lloyd P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London, 1994),

Plotinus, the grace of a human face was not a material property, such as color or symmetry, but the spiritual light illuminating them. It was not, as in Homer or Pindar, the splendor of the body: it had become the *splendor of the soul*. This means that in order to ‘see’ true beauty one had to abandon normal vision and open one’s “inner eye.” Yet – and this tension is typical of the whole Platonic tradition – it was still *sensible* beauty that, however imperfectly, disclosed the reality of its divine source: it was the Good that “bestowed graces” (*charitas*) on each intelligible form, making it desirable, and a “trace” of such grace was still visible in the material instantiation of that form.²⁴ It was not a long step from here to see in the face of one’s revered master the luminous epiphany of the highest form of divinity. It seems difficult, in such descriptions, to keep the codified rhetorical strategy of the propagandist entirely distinct from the psychological experience – hardly confined to the ancient world – of the zealous follower.

3 The Christian Holy Men

Between the 4th and 7th centuries, new figures emerged across the – quite diversified – Christian world: the wandering ascetic, the solitary or coenobitic monk, and the holy bishop. They inspired a multiform devotional literature which, often competing with its pagan counterpart, typically exalted and idealized its protagonists and aimed at promoting their example and turning readers and listeners into disciples.²⁵ Unlike that of the pagan holy men, however, the divinity of the Christian holy man was (or at least was supposed to be) *derivative*: the powers he possessed and the miracles he performed were evidence of the power of God.²⁶ In both cases, however, their beauty and “grace” was exalted as evidence of their special relationship with the divine sphere.

During the first centuries of our era, the attitude of the church fathers toward physical beauty was mostly one of suspicion and contempt: in this context, the deliberate humiliation of one’s body (or beauty) through asceticism

p. 184. The transparency of the beauty of soul through bodily *charis* appears to have been also a Stoic idea (see Plutarch, *Dialogue on love* 766e-f, who approves it).

24 Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.7.22; 1.6.2, 8.

25 On the ‘charismatic’ effects of this kind of literature see Stephen Jaeger’s essay in this volume.

26 Cf. Fowden, “The Pagan Holy Man,” p. 50. On the Christian holy men see Peter Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” *Representations* 2 (1983), 1-25; Claudia Rapp, “Saints and Holy Men,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris, 9 vols. (Cambridge, 2006-09), 2:548-52.

functioned as a way to emphasize inner purity. This trend never disappeared, but between the 5th and 6th centuries the mood changed considerably: literary portraits exalting the luminous beauty and grace of abbots, monks, and bishops became quite common, both in the East and the West. This was a beauty completely deprived of erotic allure and made transparent by its own purity; it was an anticipation of the perfection of the resurrected body, which was thought to display a full correspondence between inner and outer beauty.²⁷ In these descriptions, the attribute of grace (*charis, gratia*) was very often used to underline such correspondence. However, as pointed out by Ludwig Bieler in a classic study, already during Late Antiquity the word “grace” was a synonym for divine or angelic beauty (of personal appearance or speech) and in this sense was commonplace in biographical pagan sources; in Christian texts, however, the theological and aesthetic sense of the word had merged.²⁸ A good example of this trend is the *Life of Antony*, written by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, shortly after the hermit’s death in 356 AD. This very influential work, a great literary success both in the East and the West,²⁹ is often seen as the starting point of Christian hagiography. Here, Athanasius provided a physical description of Antony:

His face had a great and wonderful grace (*charis*). This gift (*charisma*) also he had from the Savior. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and any one who did not know him previously, wished to see him, immediately coming forward he passed by the rest, and hurried to Antony, as though attracted by his appearance. Yet neither in height nor breadth was he conspicuous above others, but in the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul. For as his soul was free from disturbances, his outward appearance was calm; so from the joy of his soul he possessed a cheerful countenance, and from his bodily movements could be perceived the condition of his soul. [...] Thus Antony was recognized, for

27 Neri, *La bellezza*, pp. 181-86.

28 Ludwig Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ* (1935-36; repr. Darmstadt, 1967), 1:52-56; for more references see Hans P. L’Orange, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture* (1947; repr. New Rochelle, 1982), pp. 29-30, 95-97. For a detailed 2nd-century physical description of Paul in which his *unattractive* features are beautified by the angelic “grace” of his face see *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 3 and see now Heike Omerzu, “The Portrayal of Paul’s Outer Appearance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*,” *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008), 252-79. For the fullness of grace of the martyr Stephen and his angelic face see *Acts of the Apostles* 6:8, 15.

29 Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 8.6.14-29.

he was never disturbed, for his soul was at peace; he was never downcast, for his mind was joyous.³⁰

In his *Life of Pythagoras* (18) Porphyry had also insisted on the psychagogic effect of Pythagoras's *charis* of speech and manners. The harmony between the body and the soul of Antony, however, was clearly an anticipation of their awaited compenetration in the *resurrected* body, something that was utterly unacceptable for the average pagan philosopher.³¹ The immutability of Antony's inner and outer condition must also be emphasized: the expression of his face is undisturbed by passions and appears locked in a mask of blessedness.³² It is interesting to note that, in the Greek text, the magnetic *charis* appearing on the face of Antony is said to be a gift (*charisma*) of God. This provides further evidence of the intertwining between the two senses of the word *charis* typical of this age: in texts like this, the visible grace and beauty of some exceptional individuals are seen as a reflection of the invisible gift of God's grace. Antony's description was to exert an influence on the subsequent (Latin and Greek) developments of the literary portraits of saints and bishops that would be difficult to overestimate. The Latin version of the *Life of Antony* most widespread in the West was completed by Evagrius of Antioch, who took some significant liberties in the translation: to the grace of Antony's face he added that of his "holy mind," made visible "through the mirror of the body" (*per speculum corporis*).³³ This, however, was hardly stretching the text beyond its original meaning. In other texts, the quality of grace was associated with the presence of light: in the 3rd-century *Life of Cyprian*, for example, the onlookers

30 Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 67, trans. Philip Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1982-83), 4:214. For the Greek text: SC 400:312-14. On the passage, see David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 243-44; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 143-44. Cf. chapter 14 of the *Life* for Antony's "grace" of speech, another gift from God.

31 However, on the resistance, by many western and eastern early Christians, to accept the notion of the *carnality* of the resurrected body see Neri, *La bellezza*, pp. 269-81.

32 Cf. Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 14 for the correspondence between the stability and purity of Antony's soul (due to his being "guided by the Word") and the partial incorruptibility of his body (an anticipation of the resurrected condition).

33 For Evagrius's version see PG 26:940. There had been also an anonymous, more literal, but less widespread Latin translation (see the text ed. by G.J.M. Bartelink in *Vita di Antonio*, trans. Pietro Citati, Salvatore Villa, 7th ed., Rome, 2003 – here p. 132).

were overwhelmed by the “sanctity” and “grace” that “shone out” of Cyprian.³⁴ In 6th-century France, all these themes and imageries had already merged: in a letter addressed to the bishop of Metz, for example, a Provençal nobleman exalted the “grace” that “glowed” on the bishop’s face, this being the “mirror” of his heart, namely of the “splendor of charity” that shone within the recesses of his breast with a clarity of immense brilliance.³⁵

In other cases, these ideas appeared in the context of much more detailed physical descriptions, whose authors often resorted to the style and language of ancient physiognomics. In a head-to-toe description of Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia, his successor Ennodius (474-521) insisted on the splendor of the bishop’s physical beauty as a sign (*index*) of the beauty of his soul.³⁶ The same connection between outer and inner beauty can be found in Ennodius’s panegyric description of Theodoricus. Given his role, the emperor appears stronger and more imposing than the bishop, but the parallel shows how indebted the representation of religious (particularly episcopal) power and authority were to the model of secular power: in both cases, physical beauty, as a sign of moral nobility or purity, seemed to work both as demonstration and a justification of their political and social role.³⁷

Early medieval Italy provides further examples of this peculiar mixture of physiognomic language and spiritualization of physical beauty, a mixture in which the polysemy of the word *gratia* continued to play a fundamental role. In the terse literary portraits of the bishops of Ravenna sketched in his *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* between 830 and 846, Agnellus of Ravenna focuses on the somatic traits that emphasize the venerability of old age and the effects of penitence; very often, also, he records the beauty and the

34 *Vita Cypriani* 6: “Tantum sanctitatis et gratiae ex eo relucebat, ut confunderet intuentium mentes.”

35 Dynamius, *Epistola* 2, CCL 117:435-36 (PL 80:25-26).

36 Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 13-17, MGH Auct. ant. 7:86. On this, see Hilde Vogt, *Die Literarische Personenschilderung des Frühen Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1934), pp. 31-32; Raffaele Passarella, “Fisiognomica ennodiana,” in *Debita dona*, eds. Paola F. Moretti et al. (Naples, 2009), pp. 401-10.

37 Passarella, “Fisiognomica,” pp. 402, 405. Ennodius’s detailed portrait of Epiphanius has an interesting eastern parallel in the 6th-century description of patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople by his disciple, the presbyter Eustratius, who appears to draw extensively from Athanasius’s description of Anthony. See Nicholas Maridines, “The Beautiful Bishop. Physiognomy and Holiness in the *Life of St. Eutychius of Constantinople*,” in *The Concept of Beauty in Patristic and Byzantine Theology*, ed. John A. McGuckin (New York, 2012), pp. 210-26. For the *charis* of Sisinnius, bishop of Constantinople (5th century) see Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.22.

harmonious proportions of the bishops and the “celestial grace” which “suffused” or “adorned” their body or face.³⁸

4 The Middle Ages

The texts quoted so far show the persistence of certain schemes and ideas that appear to have been transmitted – sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, and with significant variations depending on the historical and social context – from late antique to medieval authors. The idea that a graceful appearance was evidence of a soul in grace became widespread in the Middle Ages, especially in hagiographic and biographic literature.³⁹ As it has been repeatedly observed, the biographers of medieval saints and the biographers of late antique holy men often described and celebrated their heroes in very similar terms. Many medieval texts could be recalled to illustrate this point. I will limit myself to a few, starting with a description taken from an 11th-century monastic biography. The author is the monk Jotsaldus and the protagonist is Odilo, the fifth abbot of Cluny (962-1048), certainly one of the most influential and respected figures of his time. According to his biographer, there was “something great and divine” about Odilo, which, however, seemed to be accessible primarily through a kind of spiritual gaze. Something shone forth from Odilo’s manners and appearance that turned him into a revered object of imitation. His inner virtues became visible through what Jotsaldus defines as *gratia*, a quality that seemed very much connected – according to a model of sainthood typical of north-western Europe – to his aristocratic background. As in the case of Antony, this grace seemed to guarantee a perfect correspondence between the inward and the outward: “his inner nature was revealed on the outside by the grace that shone from him” (*qualis esset interius, relucens in eo gratia declarabat exterius*). Jotsaldus also provides a conventional and strongly idealized portrait of Odilo’s physical appearance:

He was of medium (*mediocris*) height. His face was full of authority and grace (*plenus auctoritatis et gratiae*). To gentle people he was cheerful

38 *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, MGH SS rer. Lang., 287: “Probus XIII, pinguis divina gratia et speciosus forma, decrepatus aetate, gravis corpore, ylaris vultu, caeleste perfusus gratia, roboratus Deum senper quaesivit”; cf. p. 325. On these portraits see Vogt, *Die Literarische Personenschilderung*, pp. 63-67; Paolo Squatriti, “Personal Appearance and Physiognomics in Early Medieval Italy,” *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988), 191-202.

39 On medieval biography see Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1986-2004).

and good-natured, but to the proud so terrible that they could hardly bear his presence. In his emaciation he was strong, in his pallor ornate, in his greyness, beautiful. His eyes, radiating as it were some sort of splendor (*splendore fulgentes*) were for the beholder both a source of terror (*terrori*) and admiration; they were also accustomed to tears due to his frequent exercise of the virtue of repentance. From his movements, gestures and gait shone forth the beauty of authority, the weight of gravity and the mark of serenity ... His voice was virile, and at the same time full of beauty (*plena decoris*) ... His speech was full of sweetness and grace (*plenus suavitatis et gratiae*) ... There was nothing artificial or affected about him, and nature had made him admirably harmonious both in the structure of his body and in the conduct of his life. And even though, according to the blessed Ambrose, we do not consider the beauty of the body as the locus of virtue, we do not exclude gracefulness (*gratiam*) from it.⁴⁰

According to C. Stephen Jaeger, the Cluniacs had appropriated the language and educational ideals of the cathedral schools (which had largely followed Cicero and Ambrose in their insistence on the cultivation of manners as an expression of inner virtue) and had “filled them with a specifically monastic-ascetic content.”⁴¹ Indeed, Jotsaldus’s explicitly recalled source is Ambrose, who in his *De officiis ministrorum* had chosen to indicate with the word *gratia* precisely the outward expression of moral beauty (*honestum*) which for Cicero represented the essence of *decorum*.⁴² Cicero’s ethical system, cut out for the Roman aristocrat and statesman, had been adapted by Ambrose to a different context, that of the priest and the bishop. The influence of Cassiodorus, who – in a kind of paradoxical harmonization with the classical ideals of serenity, decorum and *mediocritas* – had transfigured the bodily signs of the monk’s self-mortifications (emaciation, pallor) into an ideal of “monastic beauty,” is also detectable in the passage.⁴³ However, the connection between grace and

40 Jotsaldus, *Vita Odilonis*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 68:152-53 (PL 142:899-901). I relied in part on Stephen Jaeger’s trans.: *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 109.

41 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 109-10.

42 Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, CCSL 15:31 (PL 16:52). Cf. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.126-31.

43 Edgar De Bruyne, *Études d’esthétique médiévale*, 2 vols. (1946; repr. Paris, 1998), 1:73. Cf. Cassiodorus, *De anima* 11-13, CCSL 96:556-65 (PL 70:1298-1301), where Cassiodorus also insists on external appearance as a “mirror” (*speculum*) or “sign” (*signum, indicium*) of the soul.

light, the overlapping between aesthetic and theological grace and the insistence on the splendor radiating from Odilo's eyes hardly point to Cicero as a source; rather, these elements seem indebted to a complex of ideas (already detectable in Ambrose)⁴⁴ where the Christian-Neoplatonic imagery of light, the theme of Christ's transfiguration, and the representations of the dazzling beauty and fearsomeness of the Roman emperors had formed a tangle that seems almost impossible to unravel.⁴⁵

This complex soon developed into the idea that the inward gift of divine grace somehow overflowed on the outside, engulfing the face and the body of the saint with light and beautifying his expressions, body language, and even his flesh. In the biography of the Benedictine abbot, hermit, and wandering preacher Bernard of Tiron, completed by the monk Geoffrey Grossus around the middle of the 12th century, for example, it is written that such an "overflowing of grace" (*redundantia gratiae*) had united his mind with that of God that his face, "carrying an image (*formam*) of this union, manifested an angelic likeness"; as a result, his countenance "shone with a certain sweet brightness" (*cujusdam claritatis suavitate resplendebat*).⁴⁶ This theme became particularly widespread in the works of the Cistercians.⁴⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux had lyrically described the luminous overflowing of the beauty of the soul (*pulchritudo animae*) into the body, the gait, and the expressions of the saint.⁴⁸ One of his biographers, Geoffrey of Auxerre, adopted this language in his description of Bernard's physical appearance, where inward grace becomes visible in his flesh:

God had endowed this holy soul with an auxiliary (*adiutorium*) similar to it, and had adapted to it a body formed by means of a special blessing. In his flesh there was visible a certain grace (*gratia*), which was spiritual

44 Cf. for example Ambrose, *De bono mortis* 7.26-27 (CSEL 32:727-28).

45 This imagery had also a parallel in the literary portraits typical of medieval courtly literature. See Henrik Specht, "The Beautiful, the Handsome, and the Ugly: Some Aspects of the Art of Character Portrayal in Medieval Literature," *Studia Neophilologica* 56 (1984), 131-32; Thomas Dale, "Romanesque Sculpted Portraits: Convention, Vision, and Real Presence," *Gesta* 46 (2007), 105-06.

46 Geoffrey Grossus, *Vita beati Bernardi Tironiensis*, PL 172:1427-28. On this passage see Ellert Dahl, "Heavenly Images: The Statue of St. Foy of Conques and the Signification of the Medieval 'Cult-Image' in the West," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 8 (1978), 175-91, at pp. 186-87 (I relied in part on his translation).

47 I have explored this tradition in my *Il cielo in terra* (Turin, 2008), pp. 25-94.

48 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* 85.10-11, *Sancti Bernardi opera*, 8 vols. (Rome, 1957-77), 2:314 (PL 183:1193). Cf. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 269-72.

rather than carnal. His face radiated celestial rather than earthly brightness (*claritas praeifulgebat*): in his eyes shone (*radiabat*) angelic purity and dove-like simplicity. So great was the beauty of the inner man (*interioris hominis pulchritudo*), that it must needs break forth outwardly (*foras erumperet*) with visible signs (*indiciis*), so that the outer man appeared suffused with the overabundance of inward purity and copious grace (*de cumulo internae puritatis et gratiae copiosae perfusus*).

This typically idealized portrait is followed by a description of Bernard's body, which, like that of Odilo, appears somewhat beautified by his penitential practices:

His body was rather fragile (*tenuissimum*) and not plump, his extremely thin skin turned moderately rosy on the cheeks. And whatever natural warmth he possessed, he expended in his continuous meditation and zeal for penance. The hair on his head was a mixture of white and blonde. His beard somewhat reddish, but toward the end of his life it was covered with a thin layer of greyness. His stature was a good average (*mediocritatis honestae*) and appeared tall rather than short.⁴⁹

This description appears much more detailed and individualized than that of Odilo, but it is difficult to say how 'naturalistic' it really is: realistic traits are juxtaposed with idealized ones and the overall purpose, as in many other cases, seems to be to cast the individual as a *type* in accordance with his social role.⁵⁰ Moreover, a great deal of stress is put on the transparency of the beauty of the soul through the body, a body whose celestial radiance was also an anticipation of the glory of the resurrection. It has been persuasively argued that the penetrating eyes and dazzling brilliance of the many golden reliquary figures that continually appear from the late Carolingian period on were meant to convey a similar message. Examples of this are the reliquary of St. Foy in Conques (10th century) and that of St. Baudime in Saint-Nectaire (12th

49 Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita prima* 3.1, CCCM 89B:135 (PL 185:303). On this passage see Étienne Gilson, "La mystique de la grace dans la Queste del Saint Graal," *Romania* 51 (1925), 332-33; Dahl, "Heavenly Images," p. 187; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 273-74; Adriaan H. Bredero, *Bernard de Clairvaux*, trans. Joseph Longton (Turnhout, 1993), p. 94; James France, *Medieval Images of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Kalamazoo, 2007), pp. 1-11. On the *Vita prima*, cf. Jaeger's essay in this volume.

50 On this, see the excellent essay by Dale, "Romanesque Sculpted Portraits."

century).⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the phenomenon described in the biography of Bernard was thought to have characterized eminently the body of Christ and the Virgin Mary, which received attention especially in the numerous Cistercian allegorical commentaries on the *Song of Songs*.⁵²

The encomiastic portraits of medieval popes were often constructed in accordance with similar principles. In a propagandistic pamphlet completed around 1133 and enthusiastically disseminated throughout Europe by (among others) Bernard of Clairvaux, Arnulf, the future bishop of Lisieux, contrasted the physical beauty and sanctity of Pope Innocent II with the ugliness and depravity of his schismatic rivals, the papal legate Girard and Pope Anaclet II. Innocent II – the author writes – is of medium height (*staturae mediocris*), and the simplicity and shyness of his eyes and face are evidence of his soul's chastity; besides, his countenance “shines” (*resplendet*) with such dignity that it generates reverence in the viewer. As Antony and many others after him, Innocent is the recipient, among many other God-given “gifts” (*dona*), of a “special grace” (*specialem gratiam*) that makes him lovable in virtue of his appearance alone. Moreover, God's generosity has inspired his eyes with “something divine” (*divinum quiddam*) and “full of grace” (*plenum gratiae*) that is worthy of veneration. His voice is sweet, but also authoritative. He attracts onlookers all the more, Arnulf concludes, because his body appears to have already received a taste of the future blessedness.⁵³ More than a century later, we read in the epitaph of Pope Nicholas III, who died in 1248, that his inner nature “shone” (*foris elucebat*) on the outside and his physical appearance was the image (*imago*) of his inner virtue.⁵⁴

By the time of Thomas Aquinas, the idea of a luminous overflowing (*redundantia*) of grace into the body of the saint had been incorporated into the

51 Dahl, “Heavenly Images”; Thomas E.A. Dale, “The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture: The Tomb of Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg,” *Speculum* 77 (2002), 707-43.

52 Cf. Gilbert of Hoyland, *Sermones in Canticum Salomonis* 6.5 (PL 184:41).

53 Arnulf of Lisieux, *Invectiva in Girardum Engolismensem Episcopum*, MGH Lib. lit. 3:96. For a discussion of this work see Brigitte M. Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 209-30. On medieval portrayals of ugliness see Jan Ziolkowski, “Avatars of Ugliness in Medieval Literature,” *The Modern Language Review* 79 (1984), 1-20.

54 Gerhart B. Ladner, *Die Papstbildnisse des Altertums und des Mittelalters*, 3 vols. (Vatican City, 1941-84), 2:216. On the medieval tradition of the physical beauty of the popes and the combination of idealization and realism in their descriptions see Heinrich Schmidinger, “Das Papstbild in der Geschichtsschreibung des späteren Mittelalters,” *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 1 (1956-57), 106-29; Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del papa* (Turin 1994), pp. 286-91.

scholastic theology of beatitude. For Thomas, the glory of the resurrection coincided with the consummation of grace, and through grace the soul recovered its original beauty lost because of original sin. The “brightness” of the resurrected body was “caused by the overflowing of the glory of the soul into the body”: the *spiritual* brightness of the soul was received as *corporeal* brightness in the body. The glorious bodies are compared to gold for their brightness and to glass for their translucence. Moreover, in the blessed condition, the image of God, which resided first and foremost in the spirit, overflowed into the body, which in turn, due to its proportionality with the soul, became in itself a “representation” of the *imago Dei*. Thomas believed that a partial and temporary anticipation of this state could be achieved on earth: as the soul enjoyed the vision of God, its spiritual brightness was transmitted also to the body.⁵⁵

This valorization of the human body is certainly part of a more general trend typical of the 13th century, and Thomas, following Aristotle, had insisted on the unity and interdependence of body and soul. However, at least with respect to the image of the overflowing of inner grace on the outside, I cannot agree with Dominic Olariu’s emphatic remark that this valorization was “unprecedented” in the medieval West: as should have become clear by now, the idea of the body as an “external manifestation” of the soul’s “spiritual fulfillment” had been developed by Christian authors well before Thomas Aquinas.⁵⁶ Even the new phenomenon of the stigmata, which began to appear in the 1220s, seems to me a rather consequent development – a physiological one, so to speak – of this tradition.⁵⁷ With Francis’s stigmata, we are presented with an even more *tangible* sign of God’s grace than the one shining through the flesh of Bernard of Clairvaux, and it is no wonder that Thomas of Celano resorted to a repertoire of images similar to those employed by Bernard’s biographer to describe Francis’s stigmata.⁵⁸

55 See, respectively, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1 q. 95 a. 1 arg. 6; *Super sententiis* 4 d. 18 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 1-2; d. 44 q. 2 a. 4 qc. 1; d. 49 q. 4 a. 5 qc. 2 co; *Contra Gentiles* 4 cap. 86 n. 2.

56 Dominic Olariu, “Thomas Aquinas’ Definition of the *imago Dei* and the Development of Lifelike Portraiture,” *Bulletin du centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre* 17, no. 2 (2013), <<http://cem.revues.org/13251>>.

57 André Vauchez, *La santità nel Medioevo*, trans. Alfonso Prandi (Bologna, 1989), pp. 441-45.

58 As the dead body of Francis is uncovered at his funeral, the crowd can admire the radiant beauty of his flesh, his angelic face, and the “beauty” and “grace” of his wounds (Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima* 112-13; for a detailed physical description of Francis see *ibid.* 83).

5 The Mask of Grace

Qualities such as grace, comeliness, splendor, majesty, and inward beauty were also commonly attributed – with different meanings depending on the epoch and the context – to the Roman emperors both in encomiastic and biographical literature. Even after the Christian turn, when it became clear (especially by the 5th century) that the Christian emperor could be a saint, but not a god,⁵⁹ these qualities were often still seen as the visible manifestation of the emperor's special relationship with the deity.⁶⁰ The different developments of this theme in Byzantium and in the West cannot be explored here. A literary portrait of a Byzantine emperor, however, will suffice to give the sense of the persistence of certain schemes and ideas and of their ramifications outside the context of saints and holy men:

Alexius indeed was not especially tall but rather broad, and yet his breadth was well proportioned to his height. When standing he did not strike the onlookers with such admiration, but if when sitting on the imperial throne, he shot forth the fierce splendor of his eyes, he seemed to be a blaze of lightning, such irresistible radiance shone from his face, nay from his whole person. He had black arched eyebrows, from beneath which his eyes darted a glance at once terrible and tender, so that from the gleam of his eyes, the radiance of his face, the dignified curve of his cheeks and the ruddy colour that suffused them, both awe and confidence were awakened. His broad shoulders, muscular arms, mighty chest, in fact his generally heroic appearance, evoked in the multitude the greatest admiration and pleasure. From his whole person emanated beauty (*oran*) and grace (*charin*) and dignity, and an unapproachable majesty. And if he entered into conversation and let loose his tongue, you would have realized from his first words that fiery eloquence dwelt on his lips. For with a flood of argument he would carry the opinions of his hearers with him, for truly he could not be surpassed in discussion or action,

59 Arnaldo Momigliano, "How Roman Emperors Became Gods," *The American Scholar* 55 (1986), 181-93, at p. 193.

60 Cf. Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 59 (1969), 1-101 at pp. 44, 46-58; Neri, *La bellezza*, pp. 109-51. One of the best examples can be found in the encomium of Constantine's beauty by the 310 AD anonymous orator in *Panegyrici Latini* 6(7).17.

being as ready with his tongue as with his hand, the one for hurling the spear, the other for casting fresh spells.⁶¹

These words were written by the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena – a contemporary of St. Bernard – about the Emperor Alexius, her father. In this portrait, the majesty of the Roman emperor seems to have merged with the terrifying appearance of the Christ Pantocrator.

In the West, as is well known, an aura of sacredness surrounded kings and emperors, who were not seen as ordinary mortals and were thought to possess supernatural powers. The rituals of consecration and unction, which paralleled those in use for the bishops, mystically transfigured and elevated them by far above the crowd: for some, the kings, while remaining by nature individual men, became through such rituals ‘deified’ by the grace of God.⁶² This tradition obviously had many roots and took different forms, but it is hardly surprising to find our familiar imagery of grace applied to the encomiastic descriptions of kings. In a messianic panegyric of Frederick II written by a certain Nicholas of Bari after 1235, for example, the face of the emperor is described as “angelic” and “full of graces” (*plena gratiarum*), and reference is made both to the beauty of king David and the episode of Christ’s transfiguration.⁶³ In a 14th-century encomiastic portrait, Edward III of England is said to have had an elegant body and a face similar to that of God, in which shone an extraordinary (and propitious) grace.⁶⁴

Another important point should be stressed. Some scholars have presented the idea of the reflection of inner beauty on the body or countenance of the saint as somehow indirectly indebted to, or at least compatible with, the tenets of the ancient physiognomic tradition, whose founding texts were unknown in

61 Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 3.3, ed. Elizabeth A. Dawes, *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena* (1928; repr. London, 2009), p. 76 (PG 131:268). For a discussion, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), pp. 214-15. For the grace (*charis*) shining on the face of emperor Manuel I Comnenus see Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, PG 139:380-81.

62 Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges* (1924; Paris, 1961); Herwig Wolfram, *Splendor imperii* (Graz, 1963); Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957; repr. Princeton, 1997), pp. 42-86; Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park, 2001).

63 For the Latin text of the panegyric and a discussion see now Fulvio Delle Donne, *Il potere e la sua legittimazione* (Arce, 2005), pp. 104, 118.

64 Adam of Murimuth, *Continuatio chronicarum*, ed. Thomas Hog (London, 1846), p. 226: “Corpore elegans, vultum habens Deo similem, quia tanta gratia in eo mirifice relucebat, ut si quis in eius faciem palam respexisset, vel nocte de illo somniasset, illo die indubie speravit sibi iucunda solatia et prospera evenire.”

the Western Middle Ages until their rediscovery between the 12th and 13th centuries.⁶⁵ In part, this is certainly true, but I believe this view fails to understand the intricacy of the historical process that led to the development of the tradition I have focused on.⁶⁶ This intricacy owes much to the intertwining and mutual exchange – typical of Late Antiquity – between the tradition of the physiognomic handbooks proper and the many other forms of “physiognomic consciousness” to be found in ancient literature. More particularly, this view neglects the fortune and the influence of the Platonic doctrine of the outward irradiation of the beauty of the soul and its Christian development. In fact, what emerges from the personal descriptions quoted so far is a peculiar *convergence*: the attention to the morphological, somatic, and behavioral details, typical of the physiognomic tradition and its heirs, combines with the celebration – typically Platonic and Christian – of much more *elusive* properties, such as inward beauty, grace, splendor, or purity, which take on metaphysical and spiritual meanings fundamentally *alien* to that tradition. Besides, the insistence on the outward manifestation of the beauty of the soul through grace points to a kind of nexus or ‘correspondence’ between body and soul that appears very different – because *hierarchical* and *dualistic* to a certain extent – from the psychosomatic “sympathy” presupposed by the ancient physiognomic manuals. No exalted celebration of the spiritual over the material is to be encountered in those manuals, and the idea of the transparency or overflowing of the beauty of the soul through the body is equally absent. In fact, rather than of a correspondence, we should speak of a *triumph* of the soul over the body, which appears engulfed from an inward splendor. Nonetheless, these traditions seem to have formed a somewhat inextricable tangle.⁶⁷ Yet, however

65 Squatriti, “Personal Appearance”; Dale, “Romanesque Sculpted Portraits.” On the medieval rediscovery of physiognomics (and on the problems it generated) see the essays repr. in Jole Agrimi, *Ingeniosa scientia nature* (Tavarnuzze-Impruneta, 2002). On the circulation, in north-western France around 1100, of the Latin Anonymous physiognomic handbook see Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 115-16. “Phisionimia” as an art of reading character from the face is also attributed to the archbishop of Trier Albero in the 12th-century *Gesta Alberonis* by Balderic of Florennes (MGH SS 8:257).

66 Much more aware of this intricacy (although no mention is made of the Platonic-Christian tradition of the beauty of the soul) is Joseph Ziegler, “The Biology of the Virtues in Medieval and Early Renaissance Theology and Physiognomy,” in *Im Korsett der Tugenden*, eds. Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio and Andrea Bettels (Hildesheim, 2013), pp. 12-13.

67 I have dwelled more extensively on this issue in “Fisiognomica e grazia da Bernardo di Chiaravalle a Giovan Battista Della Porta,” *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 21 (2015), 331-45. On the different forms of physiognomic consciousness, see Evans, “Physiognomics,” p. 6;

'prevailing' the soul might be over the body, it is still *in* and *through* the body that the grace and purity of the saint became visible. The contradiction could not be solved, and it is no wonder that in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages the human body became the object of both a humiliation *and* a glorification. To deal with this kind of texts is to face that ambiguity and duplicity of the body and its "signs" which Marie-Christine Pouchelle has described in her essay on the *Golden Legend*.⁶⁸

The protagonists of the texts discussed above were portrayed by their biographers and followers as endowed with exceptional qualities and special, divine powers. Often they were literally divinized. Sometimes they were said to inspire both love and fear with their (fatherly) combination of grace and fearfulness, sometimes only love and admiration with their supposedly angelic (and motherly) meekness. In all these cases, however, their magnetic power of attraction was skillfully described by their biographers. Such power was thought to manifest itself through, among other things, oratorical skills, physical presence, and miraculous powers. However, it is easy to realize that in these portraits, not only the body, but also the personal identity of the individual described often tends to rarify, if not almost to vanish. I think this is only partially due to the fact that these descriptions employed specific rhetorical devices and formulas which had formed part of the education of both pagan and Christian men for centuries.⁶⁹

David Rohrbacher, "Physiognomics in Imperial Latin Biography," *Classical Antiquity* 29 (2010), 92-93.

68 Marie-Christine Pouchelle, "Représentations du corps dans la *Légende dorée*," *Ethnologie française* 6 (1976), 293-308. Cf. Michel Sot, "Mépris du monde et résistance des corps au XI^e et XII^e siècles," *Médiévales* 8 (1985), 6-17; Jérôme Baschet, "Âme et corps dans l'Occident médiéval: une dualité dynamique, entre pluralité et dualism," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 112 (2000), 5-30; Peter Dinzelbacher, "Über die Körperlichkeit der mittelalterlichen Frömmigkeit," in Dinzelbacher, *Körper und Frömmigkeit in der mittelalterlichen Mentalitätsgeschichte* (Paderborn, 2007), pp. 10-49. On the ambivalence toward the body in the Platonic tradition see John M. Dillon, "Rejecting the Body, Refining the Body. Some Remarks on the Development of Platonist Asceticism," in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford, 1998), pp. 80-87.

69 On the development of personal descriptions from antiquity to the Middle Ages see Geneva Misener, "Iconistic Portraits," *Classical Philology*, 19 (1924), 97-123; Vogt, *Die Literarische Personenschilderung*; Alice M. Colby, *The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature* (Geneva, 1965); Evans, "Physiognomics"; Gilbert Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991), 23-33; Jakov N. Ljubarskij, "Man in Byzantine Historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellos," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 177-86.

The medieval mind – André Vauchez has argued – was inclined to connote as *sensible* what we would rather describe as *spiritual* realities. The saints appeared to the medieval men and women as “luminous beings”: the source and nature of this light was spiritual, but its manifestations and miraculous effects were no doubt conceived as *material*.⁷⁰ This, as we have seen, was not just a medieval phenomenon: ancient men lived their spiritual life *visually*, to a degree scarcely imaginable for us.⁷¹ The material world was often proclaimed inessential, but, *at the same time*, invested with spiritual meaning. The physical appearance of the holy man deserved physiognomical attention, but tended to disappear, swallowed by an inward splendor. Hans P. L’Orange has argued that in the literary and artistic portraits of the rulers, the saints and the philosophers of Late Antiquity the “pneumatic idealization” of man resulted in an erosion of individual traits. Their “holy countenance” and visionary gaze indicated a complete detachment from this world and eventually crystallized into a “stereotyped mask of majesty.”⁷² Similarly, the glowing faces of the desert fathers studied by Georgia Frank tended to become indistinguishable as they were assimilated to those of the biblical heroes: theirs was a “biblicized physiognomy.”⁷³ Despite L’Orange’s perhaps too uniform account of the development of late antique art, it remains true that the influence of this “spiritualizing trend” on the literary and artistic portraiture of both the Latin and Byzantine Middle Ages was remarkable.⁷⁴

There is certainly a relationship between the near-complete disappearance of individual facial likeness in medieval art between the age of Charlemagne and the time of Dante⁷⁵ and the idea, typical of 12th-century religious texts, but

70 Vauchez, *La santità nel Medioevo*, p. 437; see pp. 434-41 on beauty (or ugliness) as a “sign” of sanctity (though no mention is made of physiognomics).

71 L’Orange, *Apotheosis*, p. 98.

72 Ibid., pp. 95-126. Cf. R.R.R. Smith, “Late Roman Philosopher Portraits from Aphrodisias,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 127-55; Neri, *La bellezza*, pp. 13-14, 147-51.

73 Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, pp. 160-65.

74 Cf. Willibald Sauerländer, “The Fate of the Face in Medieval Art,” in *Set in Stone*, ed. Charles T. Little (New Haven, 2006), pp. 3-17.

75 Ibid., pp. 3-4; the author links the rediscovery of physiognomical texts with the growing naturalism of medieval art. On bodily and facial expressivity of late medieval imagery and its metaphysical character see Paul Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” *Art History* 20 (1997), 350-74, and cf. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 331-48. On the much debated problem of the 12th-century “discovery of the individual” see at least Caroline Walker Bynum, “Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?” (1980), repr. and revised in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 82-109; Dale, “Romanesque Sculpted Portraits.” Bedos-Rezak (*When Ego Was Imago*, pp. 109-59) stresses the relationship between the technology and metaphors of sealing (with their logic of

in fact much older, that the true self does not coincide with one's unique personality, but with a human nature made in the image of God – “an *imago Dei* that is *the same* for all human beings.”⁷⁶ To *conform* to such image – despite the deformation it had undergone due to the Fall – was therefore the highest and the most desirable goal. This desire for sameness, so unfamiliar to us, is probably one of the reasons (together with didacticism and the tendency to meld individuals with their social roles) behind the conventionality, the repetitive-ness, and the abstraction of so many medieval literary and artistic representations of holy men: reality was aestheticized in order to match unchanging ideals.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the very attempts, in late antique and medieval sacred biographies, at rendering the physical appearance of individuals remind us that a complete absorption of the individual into the type was probably never fully achieved or desired, and that some tension always remained.⁷⁸ It remains true, however, that, like the souls of the blessed in Dante's *Paradiso*, the faces of late antique and medieval holy men tended to blur under the everlasting splendor of God-given grace. This perhaps explains why, to most of us, the grace-less and tragically expressive figures of the damned, whether depicted in Dante's *Comedy* or on the walls of medieval churches, appear much more human.

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sameness and replication) and the understanding of medieval identity between the 11th and 12th centuries.

- 76 Bynum, “Did the Twelfth Century,” p. 87 (my emphasis). Cf. Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, pp. 147-50.
- 77 Alexander Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 194.
- 78 The widespread discussions and anxieties about the post-mortem fate of one's unique physical features are also evidence of this tension. Cf. Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York, 1995).

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Compassion as Moral Virtue: Another Look at the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Gothic Sculpture

Jacqueline E. Jung

Introduction

[Charismatic art] creates a magnified, exalted semblance of life. Its basic impulse is to create a world grander than the one in which the reader or viewer lives, a world of beauty, sublime emotions, heroic motives and deeds, godlike bodies and actions, and superhuman abilities, a world of wonders, miracles, and magic – in order to dazzle and astonish the humbled viewer and lift him, by emulation or envy, up to the level of the world or the hero represented.¹

For this art historian, who long ago relinquished any resistance to the enchantments of Gothic sculpture, the question of the relationship between the fictive bodies inhabiting the walls, piers, and portals of churches and their embodied models, makers, and beholders has always been fundamental.² My interest was, if not sparked, then certainly heightened and encouraged by Stephen

* I will be forever indebted to Heiko Brandl and Andreas Waschbüsch for allowing me to examine and photograph the Virgins of Magdeburg Cathedral during their cleaning in 2009, providing access to the cathedral's gallery level, and sharing their knowledge of the figures' origins and technical aspects with me. The photos in figures 2.10 and 2.11 were made at that time. Support from the Griswold fund at Yale University enabled the travels that yielded the photos of Strasbourg Cathedral and the newly restored portal at Magdeburg. This paper took shape at a week-long interdisciplinary Mellon seminar held at Northwestern University on "The Middle Ages in Translation" in July 2013. I am grateful to Barbara Newman, who organized that event, and the many esteemed participants – especially Stephen Jaeger – whose comments helped me clarify and refine my ideas. Barbara Rosenwein has likewise offered generous and helpful insights on the material presented here. Thanks, finally, go to the perceptive anonymous readers who steered me away from some important infelicities, and to Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Martha Rust for including me in this volume.

- 1 C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 41.
- 2 This topic is explored, particularly with respect to the 13th-century programs at Naumburg and Strasbourg, in my book in progress, *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the*

Jaeger's writings on the conveyance of medieval social ideals through the eloquent bodies of clerical schoolmen, highly trained in the performance of charisma, and eventually through their stone surrogates, the elegant bodies that graced the facades of church buildings.³ The notion that the sculptural arts of the High Middle Ages, with their idealized naturalism, suppleness of presentation, and psychological suggestiveness, sought to harness and irradiate something of the charisma once ascribed to living persons was and remains a galvanizing idea in my own research. Being rooted in social practices and conceptions, it offers a way of thinking about the mimetic achievements of Gothic artists that has more historical nuance than the now-familiar invocation of the 13th century's sudden twin "discoveries" of nature and of the individual⁴ or, at the opposite extreme of historiography, the romanticizing mode of interpretation that elided present and past forms of response, often in the service of nationalist agendas.⁵ With several notable exceptions – Paul Binski, Thomas Dale, Matthew Reeve⁶ – art historians have been slow to explore the implications of Jaeger's work, but the renewed interest in questions of mimesis, presence, and psychological expressivity in Gothic sculpture in recent years should open the door to fresh engagements with the ideas put forward there.⁷

Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture, forthcoming from Yale University Press. The present essay emerges from that project.

- 3 Especially Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels. Cathedral School and Social Ideals, 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), which appeared the year I began graduate study.
- 4 The question of nature and the individual has preoccupied interpreters of Gothic since the early 20th century; see Wilhelm Vöge, "Die Bahnbrecher des Naturstudiums um 1200" (1914), repr. in *Bildhauer des Mittelalters: Gesammelte Studien* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 63-97, and most recently the catalog *Der Naumburger Meister: Bildhauer und Architekt im Europa der Kathedralen*, eds. Hartmut Krohm and Holger Kunde, 3 vols. (Petersberg, 2009, 2011). For a sensitive account of the question, see Jean A. Givens, *Observation and Image-Making in Gothic Art* (Cambridge, 2005).
- 5 See Jacqueline E. Jung, "France, Germany, and the Historiography of Gothic Sculpture," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, 2nd expanded edition, ed. Conrad Rudolph (forthcoming, Malden, MA, 2018).
- 6 Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300* (London, 2005), pp. 257-59; Thomas E.A. Dale, "The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture: The Tomb of Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg," *Speculum* 77 (2002), 707-43; Matthew M. Reeve, "Gothic Architecture and the Civilizing Process: The Great Hall in Thirteenth-Century England," in *New Approaches to Gothic Architecture*, eds. Robert Bork, William W. Clark, and Abby McGehee (Farnham, Surrey, 2011), pp. 93-109.
- 7 See, for example, Martin Büchsel, "Monströse Gefühle – die Gefühle von Monstern: Überlegungen zu emotionalen Strukturen in der marginalen Skulptur der Romanik und Gotik

As work in this vein progresses, it will be above all important to consider the interactions and interrelationships that persisted between the charismatic bodies of living people and those created by artists in various media well after the rise of strongly mimetic representation in the later 12th century. Jaeger's early writings in particular were quite insistent about visual or literary art's "usurpation" of charisma from the living, whose embodied potency seems to have faded as the closed world of cathedral schools opened up.⁸ But a view into the broader terrain of medieval culture suggests a more complex situation: the existence of beautiful bodies in sculpture and poetry seems not to have stripped the aura from the animate bodies of special people, even if these were more often found outside the exclusive domains of cathedral schools and monasteries than had been the case in the past. To judge from chronicles, hagiography, and even inquisitorial reports, men and women of the 13th and 14th centuries were no less apt to scrutinize the bodies and behaviors of living charismatics for features to imitate, admire, or condemn than those who studied their teachers in the 10th and 11th centuries, even if they did so in different ways.⁹ Rather than taking over charismatic power from the living, art of this later period was constantly paying homage to the beautiful bodies, controlled movements, and heroic emotions of the living (specifically, the living elite) – who, in a kind of feedback loop, were also learning from such representations

Frankreichs," *IMAGO. Interdisziplinäres Jahrbuch für Psychoanalyse und Ästhetik* 1 (2012), 75-103; Assaf Pinkus, *Sculpting Simulacra in Medieval Germany, 1250-1380* (Farnham, Surrey, 2014). Work on expressivity is being immensely facilitated by the writings of Barbara H. Rosenwein, most recently *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge, 2016).

- 8 This point emerges with special force in Jaeger, "Charismatic Body – Charismatic Text," *Exemplaria* 9 (1997), 117-37.
- 9 See, among many others, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2006); Dyan Elliott, "The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, eds. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1997), pp. 141-73; Gábor Klaniczay, "On the Stigmatization of Saint Margaret of Hungary," in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Rubin (Princeton, 2009), pp. 274-84; Walter Simons, "Reading a Saint's Body: Rapture and Bodily Movement in the *Vitae* of Thirteenth-Century Beguines," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester, 1994), pp. 10-23; Mitchell B. Merback, "The Living Image of Pity: Mimetic Violence, Peace-Making, and Salvific Spectacle in the Flagellant Processions of the Later Middle Ages," in *Images of Medieval Sanctity: Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. Debra Higgs Strickland (Leiden, 2007), pp. 135-80. This is leaving aside the examples of the 13th-century saints Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth of Thuringia, who were the subjects of both admiration and imitation well before their lives were translated into text and image; see the contribution by Jaeger in this volume.

how best to behave – and then broadcasting them to a mass audience with precisely the ennobling intentions and effects that Jaeger describes.

Gothic sculpture functioned as a vital device of translation in this process, not only of biblical stories and theological precepts but also of moral virtues and behavior – and thus of spiritual formation.¹⁰ The former kinds of content (biblical and theological) relied on shared conventions of formal positions and iconographic motifs. The latter spoke the language of the body. Without the existence of beautiful living bodies to provide inspiration, or to be refined and further ennobled by the effects of art, the splendid men and women of Gothic statuary would have had no reason for being; schematic reliefs, wall paintings, or even textual inscriptions could have conveyed theological, narrative, or didactic subject matter just as well.

This paper originally set out to chart the path medieval sculpture took from its origins as an auratic medium intimately bound to real bodies and dismissive of mimetic effects (as with the reliquary statue of St. Foy at Conques and early tomb effigies at Merseburg and Quedlinburg) to a charismatic medium that was at once increasingly detached from once-living bodies (corpses and relics) and increasingly devoted to simulating the appearance and presence of beautiful, mobile bodies in real space (beginning with the Royal Portals at Chartres).¹¹ This proved to be an overblown ambition, and for the sake of decorum I have chosen to focus instead on the sculptural theme that looms so large in Jaeger's oeuvre: that of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. In my exploration of this subject as one that encouraged at least some artists to grapple, in novel ways, with the relation between interior and exterior person, I have found that the kind of bodily eloquence Jaeger praises in the program at Strasbourg Cathedral had earlier origins, and was realized even more forcefully in the mid-13th-century sculpture group at Magdeburg Cathedral. Placing the Strasbourg maidens into a broader trajectory of representations – as well as into their own context in a more expansive program of imagery on the cathedral's three western portals – allows us also to recognize that they are not as straightforward in their evocation of virtue and vice as they seemed to be. They invite us to expand our understanding of charismatic representation's effects to encompass not only the impulse to emulate but also the desire to *empathize*. The cultivation of empathy – or, to put it in medieval terms, *compassio*, the ability

10 My view is in line with that of Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013), a book I read only after this paper was complete.

11 The use of these terms to chart this development was motivated by Jaeger's "Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory," *New German Critique* 114, vol. 38 (2011), 17-34.

to feel along with a suffering other – was no less a part of the program of spiritual formation in the 13th century than was the cultivation of decorum through the emulation of gracious models. Art, particularly large-scale sculptures that confronted beholders in highly charged threshold spaces, played an important role in each domain.

“Virtue made visible”: The Wise and Foolish Virgins at Strasbourg Cathedral

Readers of Stephen Jaeger’s books, from *The Envy of Angels* to *Enchantment*, will be well familiar with the Wise and Foolish Virgins of Strasbourg Cathedral of c.1280-90, for they appear there as the very epitomes of charismatic figural arts despite their temporal distance from the decline of charismatic culture in the 12th century.¹² The building’s dizzying Rayonnant facade, funded by the Strasbourg citizenry in the last decade of the 13th century, thrums with visual excitement (fig. 2.1).¹³ At the lowest level, a sculpture program of unusual ambition links the three portals: a tympanum with the Passion of Christ and jamb figures of prophets forms the program’s center, while Virtues conquer Vices beneath an Infancy tympanum in the northern (left-hand) doorway and Wise and Foolish Virgins perform their drama beneath a Last Judgment tympanum on the right (fig. 2.2).¹⁴ The doorways are spaced relatively far apart, leaving room for two additional sculptures to occupy each of the narrow wall surfaces between the outer jambs and the projecting frontal buttresses. Extending approximately 3.5 meters from the facade wall at ground level, these buttresses create intimate pockets of space – like miniature porches – for viewers approaching each threshold.¹⁵

In Jaeger’s writings, the status and impact of the Wise and Foolish Virgins as a group within a larger architectural and pictorial context is of less importance than the bodily *habitus* the figures display as individuals (figs. 2.3-2.5). The Virgins, he argues, “dramatize and enact virtue or vice,” “carrying their emblems in the contours of their bodies” alone.¹⁶ The Wise in particular demonstrate

12 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, pp. 331-48; idem, *Enchantment*, pp. 134-61.

13 For the social and financial situation, see Henry Kraus, *Gold Was the Mortar: The Economics of Cathedral Building* (London, 1979), pp. 109-30.

14 Benoît Van den Bossche, *La cathédrale de Strasbourg: Sculpture des portails occidentaux* (Paris, 2006); Bruno Boerner, *Bildwirkungen: Die kommunikative Funktion mittelalterlicher Skulpturen* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 146-82.

15 Van den Bossche, *La cathédrale*, p. 23.

16 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, p. 339.

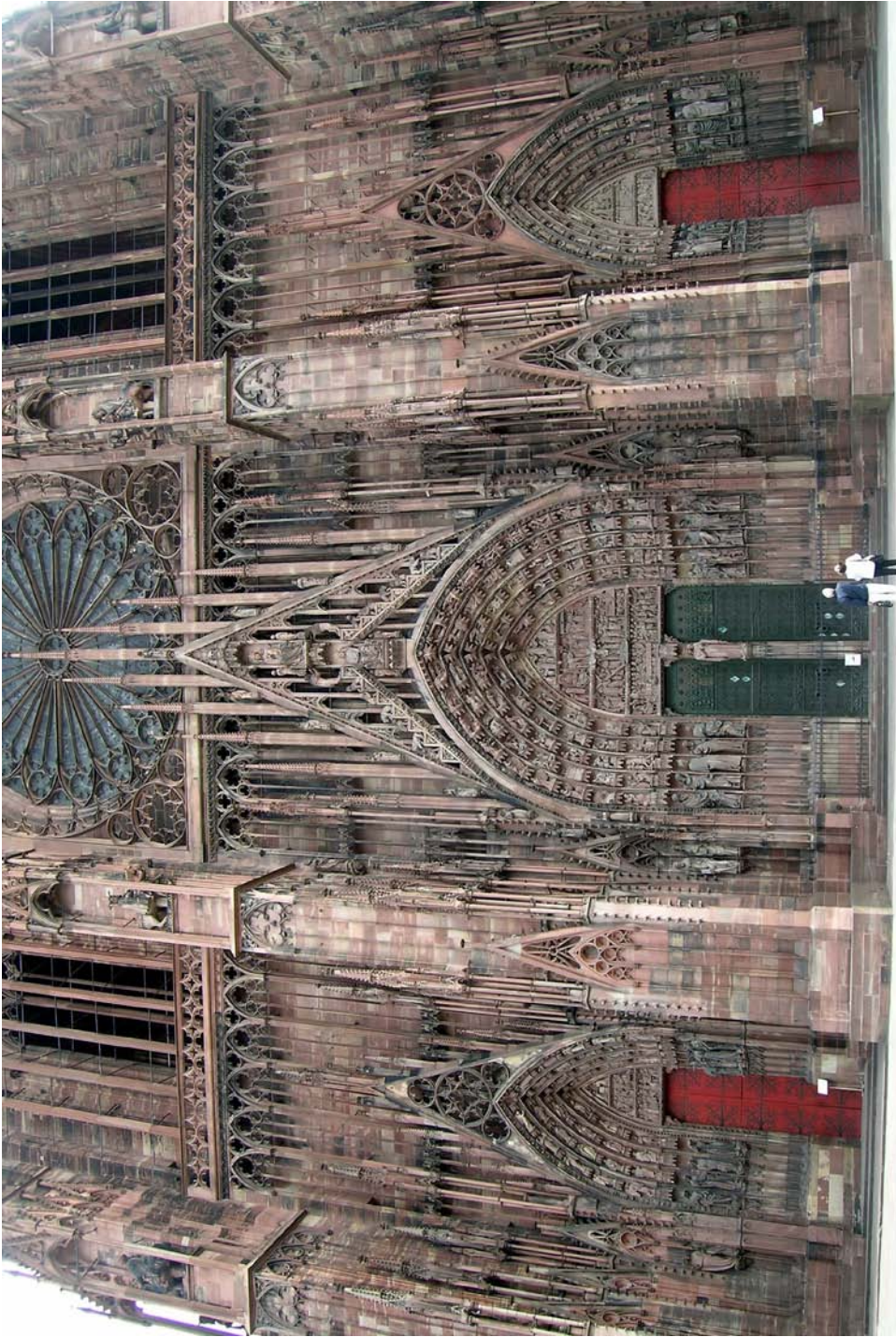


FIGURE 2.1 Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, complete view of portals (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

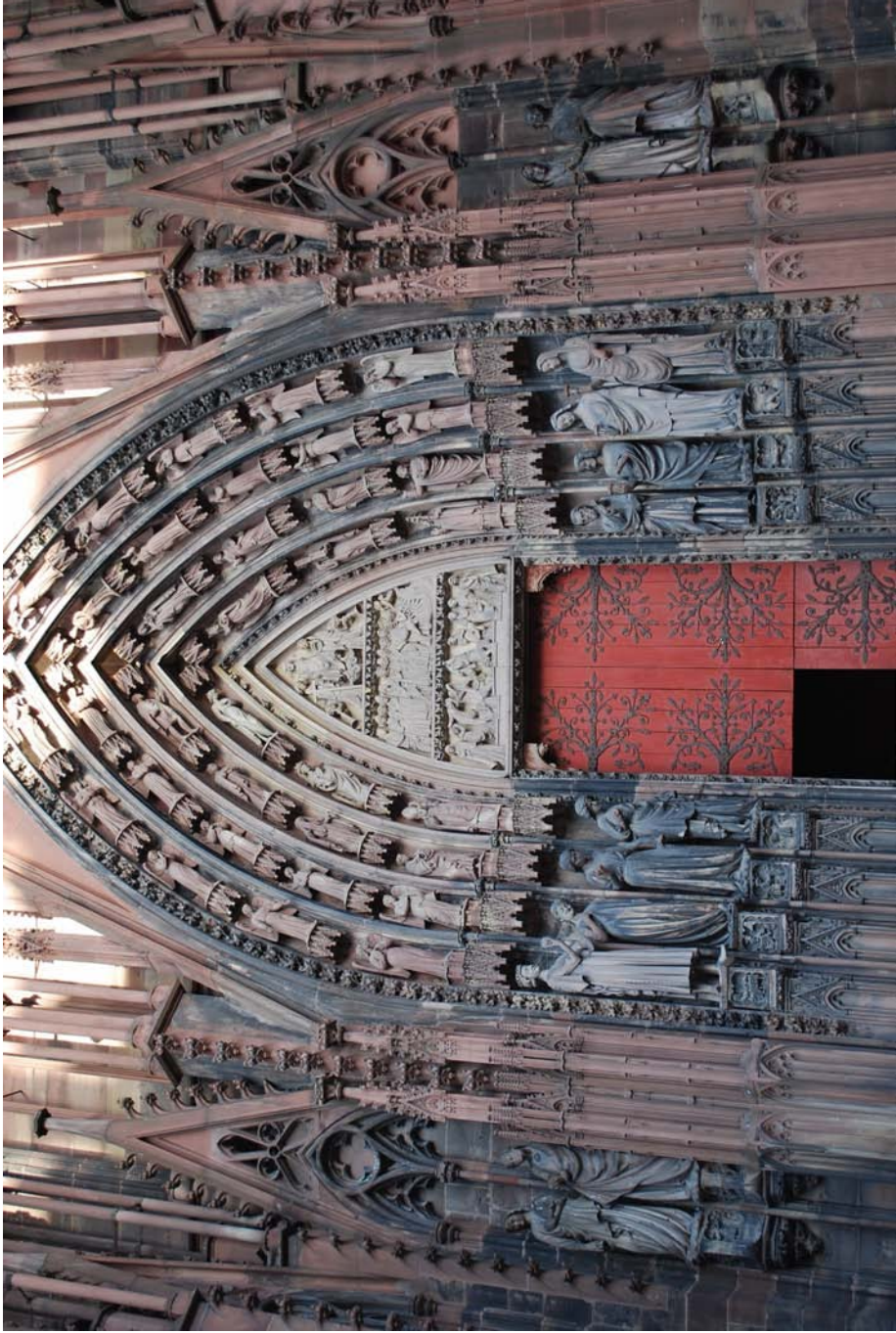


FIGURE 2.2 Strasbourg, Cathedral (Münster) of Notre-Dame. West facade, south (right-hand) portal, with Last Judgment tympanum and Wise and Foolish Virgins in jambs and adjacent wall-niches, c.1280-90 (several figures are replicas of originals now located in Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame) (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

the kind of “serenity and moderation” that makes them legible as “realizations of virtue made visible” (fig. 2.4).¹⁷ The Wise Virgin on the wall niche (known in the older sources as *La Parisienne* for her easy elegance),¹⁸ her face framed by a softly billowing veil and her fingers tugging lightly on her mantle-strap, “exudes both wisdom and fortitude,” yielding an impression of “strength coupled with restraint and of a mean struck between opposing tensions” (fig. 2.5b, left). The face that forms the frontispiece to *The Envy of Angels* belongs to her neighbor on the portal’s outermost jamb (fig. 2.4, right). Whether or not we share Jaeger’s discernment in its features of “the sexual promise and erotic potential of virginity,” this solemn visage holds up beautifully alongside Bernard of Clairvaux’s description of the virgin Sophia, whose perfectly composed body even the angels envied, and Hugh of St. Victor’s exemplary teachers, whose “excellent and sublime qualities” at once radiated outward and drew attentive disciples to him, prompting them to “recreate those qualities” in themselves.¹⁹

The Foolish, for Jaeger, likewise convey their inner conditions through their bodies, but their message is not as pretty (figs. 2.3, 2.5a). Their status as negative exemplars is not only evident in the giddy behavior of one of the women, who giggles as she drops her lamp and pulls back the bodice of her outer dress as if to give the handsome, apple-brandishing man next to her a glimpse of her loosely clad chest. This is a case of overt didacticism, with the moral message hammered home by a whole cluster of conventional signs, from the Virgin’s visible teeth (indicating a lack of restraint) to the vermin, invisible to her, seething across the back of her male love interest.²⁰ The sculptors had more subtle means for revealing the moral flaws of the other women. With their “grim glances,” as Jaeger describes them (invoking a description of Odo of

17 This and the following quotations come from *ibid.*, pp. 340-41.

18 See Van den Bossche, *La cathédrale*, p. 194.

19 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, p. 340 and frontispiece. It is worth noting that the black-and-white photographs of the figures’ heads that illustrate Jaeger’s writings, first published in Otto Schmitt’s monograph *Die gotischen Skulpturen des Strassburger Münsters* (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), present the Virgins in a highly artificial way, using an elevated standpoint, soft lighting, and the conventional angles of celebrity head-shots to create a sense of intimacy between viewers and subjects and to bring out the women’s glamour and poise. Standing quite high above ground level, and forming a small part of a much larger sculptural and architectural tableau, the figures do not lend themselves well to such close scrutiny when encountered in situ. It is possible to read Jaeger’s sumptuous writings on the Virgins as part of a chain of charismatic representations: they are charismatic texts on charismatic photographs of charismatic sculptures of charismatic bodies. Each level presents the other in new ways.

20 On the immoderate laughter of this figure, see Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, pp. 342-44.



FIGURE 2.3 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, south portal, left-hand jamb: Prince of the World with three Foolish Virgins (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

Orléans), these figures demonstrate the “anger and spoiled petulance” that must be a reason for their downfall; in their “oddly cocked and awkwardly tensed” poses, they demonstrate a lack of control that was, for medieval churchmen a sure sign of “inconstancy of mind.”²¹

What we see in these expressive bodies, in other words, are not, or not only, the results of the judgment that has been cast upon the Virgins; they are also the *causes* of that judgment. The bodies and faces of the Wise reveal, through their composure, the wisdom and grace that earned them a place at the wedding feast, while the Foolish – both the laughing maiden and her sulky counterparts – demonstrate the lack of decorum and self-control that had ensured their rejection.²² In both cases, the figures stand as exemplars of behavior for their viewers – a broad and variegated audience of women and

²¹ Ibid., p. 344.

²² Jaeger, *Emy of Angels*, p. 344.



FIGURE 2.4 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, south portal, right-hand jamb: Christ the Bridegroom with three Wise Virgins* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

men, laity and clergy,²³ who were expected to scrutinize and interpret their bodies with a sensitivity once associated solely with the rarefied worlds of cathedral schools and monasteries.

The Hidden Oil of Conscience: Making Sense of the Virgins in the Exegetical Tradition

The idea that the two groups should illustrate not only contrasting reactions to the Judgment playing out in the tympanum but also *moral* oppositions – that they should represent a “homiletic contrast of moral absolutes,” in Paul Binski’s formulation²⁴ – accords well with many representations of the Virgins in

23 For the social context (and conflicts) under which the Strasbourg facade rose, see Boerner, *Bildwirkungen*, pp. 139–46.

24 Paul Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile,” *Art History* 20 (1997), 350–74 at p. 355.



FIGURE 2.5 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, south portal, (a) left-hand wall-niche with two Foolish Virgins, (b) right-hand wall-niche with two Wise Virgins* (PHOTOS: AUTHOR).

diverse media up to and well beyond the 13th century. Their positioning alone might do the trick. On the central portal of the west facade of St-Denis, from 1140-44, which first introduced the theme to monumental sculpture, the Virgins occupy the impostes directly adjacent to the door (fig. 2.6).²⁵ In keeping with their status as fictional characters, they appear as pictorial footnotes to the theme of Last Judgment rendered in the tympanum and archivolts above. The banderole that unfurls from Christ's right hand extends the invitation to "come ye blessed of my Father," while that in his left admonishes "Depart from me, ye cursed" – lines from Jesus's prediction of the words of Judgment that comes soon after his parable about the Virgins (Matt. 25:32-41). Within this composition, the two rows of five nearly identical Virgins, who obligingly balance their oil lamps upright or upside-down, literally underscore the larger message

25 See Paula Lieber Gerson, "Suger as Iconographer: The Central Portal of the West Façade of Saint-Denis," in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York, 1986), pp. 183-98 at pp. 187-88.



FIGURE 2.6 *Abbey church of St-Denis. West facade, detail of center portal with Last Judgment tympanum and reliefs of Wise and Foolish Virgins on imposts, c.1135-40 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

about the finality of Judgment and the need for timely preparation. Charisma is neither needed nor desired in this didactic scheme. The little reliefs, like those that embellished smaller-scale objects such as sarcophagi and shrines, *stand for* ideas of spiritual formation, suggesting the distinction between sufficient and inadequate moral virtue without needing to render such qualities visible.²⁶

26 See, for example, the Spanish tomb studied by Elizabeth Váldez del Álamo, "Lament for a Lost Queen: The Sarcophagus of Doña Blanca in Nájera," *Art Bulletin* 78 (1996), 311-33; and the early 12th-century Epiphanius Shrine in Hildesheim, discussed in Walter Lehmann,

But the parable itself is ambiguous, and the notion that one cluster of women was superior in morals or actions, and that the other was flawed to the point of deserving consignment to hell, was hardly self-evident. The narrative splits the group of “ten virgins” – all, strangely, defined as members of the “Kingdom of Heaven” – into opposing camps of wise and foolish from the outset (Matt. 25:1-2), but then proceeds to describe their *shared* actions and motivations.²⁷ All were chaste; all took their lamps to greet the wedding party; all fell asleep; all awoke at the call of the bridegroom. What made the Foolish foolish was only the fact that they had not brought enough oil to keep their lamps burning during the evidently unanticipated delay, and thus had to rely first on their companions and then, barring their help, on the oil vendors, who clearly kept late hours but plied their trade at some distance from the main road.²⁸

The virtue of the Wise was that they had lots of oil. Reading against the grain, a skeptical reader might note that they did *not* display, through their works, the Christian virtues of generosity, compassion, or even fortitude. Indeed, one can easily imagine the moral of the story being inverted, with one group of women lauded for their perseverance and active efforts to ensure that there would be sufficient light for the procession, and the other group chastened for their refusal to share and their complacency in merely kicking back and waiting for the festivities to begin.²⁹ We might think here of the parable of the Rich Man (*Dives*) and the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), such an important theme in Romanesque sculpture.³⁰ In that story the greedy *Dives*, having withheld food from the dying pauper at his doorstep, went to hell upon his own death while Lazarus reposed in the bosom of Abraham. This tale, too, ended with a radical separation: as *Dives* implored Lazarus for a drop of water to cool

Die Parabel von den klugen und törichten Jungfrauen (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1916), p. 32.

27 For an analysis of this text from a biblical historian's perspective, see Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2008), pp. 505-19.

28 Ruben Zimmermann, “Das Hochzeitsritual im Jungfrauengleichnis. Sozialgeschichtliche Hintergründe zu Mt. 1-13,” *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002), 48-70. For some of the more perplexing aspects of the parable – especially the bridegroom's breach of decorum by shutting out any members of the wedding party – see Vicky Balabanski, “Opening the Closed Door: A Feminist Rereading of the ‘Wise and Foolish Virgins’ (Mt. 25.1-13),” in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London, 2002), pp. 71-97.

29 As per Balabanski, “Opening the Closed Door.”

30 Ilene H. Forsyth, “Narrative at Moissac: Schapiro's Legacy,” *Gesta* 41 (2002), 71-94.

his thirst, Abraham replied that “between us and you there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither.” The door between zones in the afterlife is no less firmly closed than the one dividing Dives’s house from the harsh outside world – or, for that matter, the one that seals off the wedding feast in Matthew 25. (Also worth noting is that, of the two guardians of the gate, Abraham exercised far more courtesy than the Bridegroom, being willing to converse with the anguished Dives rather than claiming not to know him.)

Medieval artists often pictured the Foolish Virgins’ exclusion through the motif of the closed door. We see this in widely varied representations in diverse media, from the scene in the Rossano Codex, a luxurious Syrian manuscript from the 6th century, where a solitary door intrudes upon the women’s procession through a landscape, to one in the Rothschild Canticles, a 14th-century Flemish florilegium, where the Wise Virgins enjoy a fabulous party in the upper stories of a castle while the Foolish clamor vainly up the ramparts toward the door, risking falling into a moat below.³¹ But the parable gives no indication that the Foolish women were guilty of the kind of active wrongdoing that prompted Dives’s banishment; theirs was a victimless crime. The church fathers were quick to recognize this as they mulled over the narrative, which they, no less than modern critics, found inconsistent and confusing. It was easy enough to understand that the women’s sleep represented death, their arousal by the Bridegroom the resurrection, and their ultimate separation the effects of the Last Judgment.³² But what was the oil upon whose absence or presence the women’s fates hinged?

Some early commentators, including Jerome, contended that it must be the good works accumulated during a person’s lifetime; without having displayed generosity to others, above all through the distribution of alms, one could not

31 Guglielmo Cavallo, *Codex Purpureus Rossanensis* (Rome, 1993); Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 47–52. For earlier representations in various media, see Hildegard Heyne, *Das Gleichnis von den klugen und törichten Jungfrauen: Eine literarisch-ikonographische Studie zur altchristlichen Zeit* (Leipzig, 1922), pp. 79–98; for later ones, Lehmann, *Parabel*; and Regine Körkel-Hinkfoth, *Die Parabel von den klugen und törichten Jungfrauen (Mt. 25, 1–13) in der bildenden Kunst und im geistlichen Schauspiel* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994).

32 This would be the interpretation given in the Glossa Ordinaria in the 12th century; see Walafrius Strabo (attr.), *Glossa Ordinaria: Evangelium secundum Matthaeum*, cap. xxv, in PL 114, cols. 164A–65A, closely followed by Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century*, ed. Harry Bober, trans. Marthiel Mathews (Princeton, 1984), pp. 202–03.

hope to join the Elect.³³ Augustine took the opposite point of view.³⁴ With Jerome, he stressed the fundamental parity of the ten maidens, who, despite their gender, were intended to “relate to us all, that is, to the whole Church together.” Their virginity was their purity of the five senses, and the lamps they all possessed were good works. What the Foolish did not possess, he reasoned, was *caritas*, the sincere and selfless love that must fill benevolent actions if they are to carry weight in the afterlife.³⁵ Along with this virtue, which motivated good works, the Foolish lacked *joy*, which emerged from them. At least, whatever joy they might feel about their “continence” and their pious behavior came from the praise that others – the vendors of oil – lavished on them. Joy, in Augustine’s vision, must arise solely from the good person’s sense that “he is inwardly pleasing to God.”

The potential discrepancy between the inner person and her outward deeds was also central to the interpretation expounded by Gregory the Great.³⁶ For him the oil signified the “brightness of glory” – something akin to Augustine’s joy – that flickers forth in the “small containers [of] our hearts, in which we carry all that we think.” These lamps are what Gregory calls “consciences,” which either glow from within, stoked by the individual person, or are sustained by the praise of others. The latter form of fuel runs out easily; as the Psalmist put it, “all the glory of the king’s daughter is within” (Ps. 44.14). Gregory went further than his forebears in thematizing the relation between inside and outside, seen and unseen. The Wise Virgins’ virtues, being motivated by the self alone, may not be apparent to other people. It is not just that they are “attracted to interior things,” but even when they perform good deeds in the world they “decline to receive human praise,” and “conceal [their glory] within their own consciences.” The Foolish may outwardly do everything right – they may “afflict their bodies through abstinence ... [be] devoted to teaching, ... bestow much on the needy” – but they “seek only the recompense of human praise.” At the time of the Bridegroom’s arrival, these works, so dependent on

33 St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, Fathers of the Church 117, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, DC, 2010), ch. 25, 282. See also St. John Chrysostom, “Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser. 1, vol. 10, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI, 1888), hom. 78, pp. 451-53; Origen, “Commentaria in Matthaem,” in PG 13, cols. 1699-1703 at 1699.

34 St. Augustine, *Sermon 43 on the New Testament*, par. 2, in from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser. 1, vol. 6, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, 1888), pp. 401-05 at pp. 401-02, par. 2.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 402, par. 5.

36 Gregory the Great, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Book 1, Homily 12, in PL 76: cols. 1118-23; trans. by Dom David Hurst in *Forty Gospel Homilies* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1990), homily 10, pp. 68-75.

outside approval, will be “hidden within”; with no one able to testify to them, it will be as if they never existed at all. The judge himself, Gregory avers, will be “a witness not only of works but also of hearts.”

The idea that the good deeds of individuals had to be fueled by sincere intentions, not by the desire to impress others, had an enduring impact on later generations of commentators. By the 12th century, it was taken as the self-evident message of the Virgins’ story by Hugh of St. Victor, a man who had spent much time, in other contexts, reflecting on the connections between the inner person and the body that gives it expression.³⁷ “The ten virgins are all believers, displaying good works; the lamps are the works; the oil is grace or good conscience (*bona conscientia*). The five foolish virgins signify those who, by the good deeds they do, seek to obtain not good conscience but human praise. The wise virgins are those who, by the good deeds they do, seek to obtain not human praise but good conscience.”³⁸ Nothing, in this line of reasoning, could visibly distinguish the Wise from the Foolish – neither actions nor attributes nor the “contours of the body.” The oil of grace was hidden deep in the recesses of the individual heart.

Casting Judgment: The Virgins as Emblems of Virtue and Vice

Until the mid-13th century (and long thereafter), there was a significant cleft between theological and visual interpretations of the biblical narrative. Many artists could not resist imposing moral judgments on the characters, using costume, comportment, and gesture to show viewers that it was something concrete and visible that had landed the Foolish in trouble. In one of the first narrative renditions of the tale a large-scale format, found on the lower register of the tympanum of the St. Gall Portal (*Galluspforte*) at Basel Cathedral (c.1185-1200, fig. 2.7), the cause of the women’s separation is mapped clearly onto their bodies.³⁹ On the proper right side of the door, which stands like a barricade in the center of the lintel, the Wise Virgins approach the Bridegroom wearing baggy frocks and the wimples of married women, their uplifted hands and

37 Hugh looms large in Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, particularly in his instructions to novices on bodily self-fashioning as a means of controlling spiritual impulses. See also Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l’Occident medieval* (Paris, 1990), pp. 173-206.

38 Hugh of St. Victor, *Allegoriae in Novum Testamentum, Liber 11: In Matthaeeum*, cap. xxxiv, in PL 175, cols. 799-800.

39 Hans-Rudolf Meyer and Dorothea Schwinn Schürmann, *Schwelle zum Paradies: Die Galluspforte des Basler Münsters* (Basel, 2000), esp. pp. 157-58.

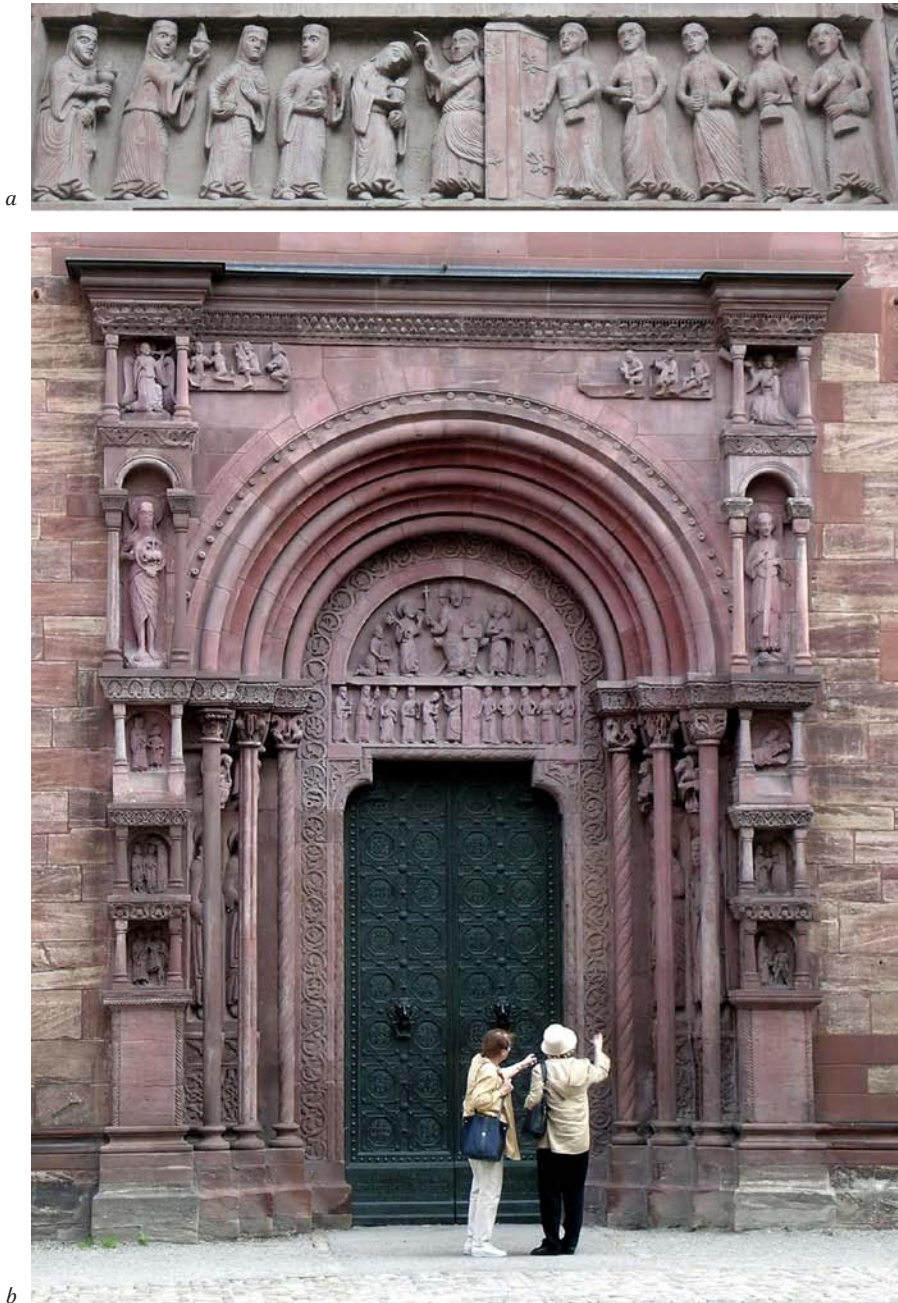


FIGURE 2.7 *Basel Cathedral (Münster). North transept, portal of St. Gall (Galluspforte), c.1185-1200. Full view of portal with Christ in Majesty and saints in tympanum and reliefs of the Works of Mercy on flanking walls (b); detail of lintel with Wise and Foolish Virgins (a) (PHOTOS: AUTHOR).*

wide eyes registering a kind of pious awe (fig. 2.7a). They strike a dramatic contrast with the row of Foolish Virgins on the opposite side, with their free-flowing hair and body-skimming gowns that emphasize their slim physiques, while also resembling the good matrons who are shown practicing the Seven Works of Mercy in reliefs adjacent to the door. Thus, through a process of visual analogy and contrast playing out across the parts of the portal, the bodies of the Wise at Basel cement their moral status: their virtue is simultaneously transitive (i.e. outwardly directed, as suggested by the correspondence with the Works of Mercy) and intransitive, having to do with their own modest self-display.⁴⁰

Sartorial distinctions marked the Virgins' moral difference in many other cases, for example in the early 13th-century lintel of the church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Eguisheim (Alsace), where the Wise Virgins form a line of identical stolid matrons who approach Christ with veiled heads and hands, while the Foolish, with heavy collared cloaks draped casually over their shoulders, turn toward each other pairwise in a suggestion of both mental and physical disarray (fig. 2.8).⁴¹ This is a somewhat more restrained version of the group of Foolish we find painted in the small central apse of the castle chapel in Hocheppan (Tyrol).⁴² Here the cloaks splay open to reveal the women's form-fitting, rouched bodices, floor-length sleeves, and braided tresses – fine court clothing that envelops bodies twisting and cringing in distress.⁴³ The pattern of aligning a courtly habitus with moral failings continued farther north, for example in the series of reliefs made for the imposts of a French-style portal at the newly rebuilt metropolitan cathedral in Magdeburg during the second or third decade of the 13th century.⁴⁴ The portal project was never completed, but its figures received new life at the gallery level of the church's apse, where they

40 For the useful distinction between transitive and intransitive modes of expression, introduced by Richard Wollheim, see Binski, "Angel Choir," p. 353.

41 Willibald Sauerländer, *Von Sens bis Strassburg: Ein Beitrag zur kunstgeschichtlichen Stellung der Strassburger Querhauskulpturen* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 133-35. I am grateful to Dr. Stephanie Luther for sharing her photos of this portal with me.

42 Helmut Stampfer and Thomas Steppan, *Affreschi romanici in Tirolo e Trentino* (Milan, 2008), pp. 128-31, 218-21.

43 This is a version of the attire worn by the elegant, gently smiling queens who occupy the jambs of the 12th-century Royal Portal at Chartres Cathedral, a seminal monument in the development of charismatic sculpture. See Janet E. Snyder, *Early Gothic Column-Figure Sculpture in France: Appearance, Materials, and Significance* (Farnham, Surrey, 2011).

44 Heiko Brandl, *Die Skulpturen des 13. Jahrhunderts im Magdeburger Dom: Zu den Bildwerken der älteren und jüngeren Werkstatt* (Halle an der Saale, 2009), pp. 22, 28, posits 1232, when the middle level of the choir (where the figures were ultimately installed) was complete,



FIGURE 2.8 Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, Equisheim. Lintel of portal with Wise and Foolish Virgins, c.1210-15 (PHOTO: STEPHANIE LUTHER).



FIGURE 2.9 *Magdeburg, Cathedral of St. Maurice. Apse with column figures and reliefs from an unfinished portal inserted at gallery level, c.1210-20; this installation was completed by 1232. The Wise and Foolish Virgins stand within small arched niches near the capitals of the colored columns (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*



FIGURE 2.10 *Magdeburg Cathedral. Apse, gallery level. Reliefs of a Wise Virgin (a) and a Foolish Virgin (b) from earlier campaign, c.1210-20 (PHOTOS: AUTHOR).*

came to surround the high altar (fig. 2.9). In keeping with established conventions, the Wise Virgins wear bulky garments and headdresses (fig. 2.10a), while the Foolish show off their slim bodies enveloped in sleek dresses. One, who smiles softly out at viewers, wears a crown of flowers and hooks a finger in the strap of her mantle in a display of courtly elegance and delight in worldly pleasures (fig. 2.10b).

as the terminus ante quem for the group. In *ibid.*, pp. 29-33 he presents the various attempts to reconstruct that portal going back to Adolph Goldschmitt's first effort in 1899.



a



b

FIGURE 2.11 *Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal, figures of a Wise Virgin (a) and a Foolish Virgin (b), from later campaign, c.1240-50. In these photos, the figures had been removed from the portal for restoration (PHOTOS: AUTHOR, 2009).*

About two decades later (c.1240-50), at the same cathedral, something extraordinary happened. Sculptors from a workshop associated with Bamberg Cathedral (and thus, at least indirectly, with the cathedral at Reims) were hired to create a new group of Wise and Foolish Virgins to occupy the jambs of the north transept portal, which formed the main entryway to the building (see fig.

2.12).⁴⁵ The choice to dedicate an entire portal to female figures – who were, moreover, characters in a parable, not patrons, donors, or saints – was groundbreaking. We know these sculptors looked carefully at the existing representation of the theme in the cathedral. One of the figures they made in fact replicates, in attire, pose, and good-humored mood, the most winsome of the earlier Foolish Virgins, but now expanded into larger (if not quite life-size) scale and carved in the round (fig. 2.11a).⁴⁶ The only difference in the representation of the women is that the younger figure holds her lamp upright. Although bearing all the traditional attributes of the Foolish cohort, she is, in fact, one of the Wise.

Charisma, Compassion, and the Eloquence of Bodies at Magdeburg Cathedral

This charming mid-century Wise Virgin occupies the central position among her cohort on the left-hand splay of the north transept portal jambs (figs. 2.12, 2.13). (Today the entire portal area is sheltered within a small porch added to the building around 1310-20. The outermost statues on each side have undergone some slight rearrangement to fit the space; originally they would have been swiveled to face the marketplace adjacent to the cathedral's north side. The positioning of the three innermost figures seems to be that intended by the initial designers.)⁴⁷ Unlike some of her companions, who turn toward viewers entering from either the porch doors or the door of the cathedral, she looks straight toward her counterpart on the opposite jamb – a woman who is, in all physical respects, her clone (figs. 2.11b, 2.14). The only differences lie in costume details: their belts, head-circlets, the brooches are distinctly embel-

45 Martin Gosebruch, "Das oberrheinisch-bambergische Element im Magdeburger Dom," in *Der Magdeburger Dom: Ottonische Gründung und staufischer Neubau. Bericht über ein wissenschaftliches Symposium in Magdeburg vom 7.10. bis 11.10.1986*, ed. Ernst Ullmann (Leipzig, 1989), pp. 132-40; Klaus Niehr, "Die Skulpturen des Magdeburger Domes: Traditionsvergewisserung und Modernität," in *Aufbruch in die Gotik: Der Magdeburger Dom und die späte Stauferzeit*, ed. Matthias Puhle, 2 vols. (Mainz, 2009), 1:98-113 at pp. 106-07.

46 The figures average 125.4 cm (4.11 inches) in height, according to the measurements of Brandl, *Skulpturen*, pp. 217-22. But their placement within the starkly angled splays of the jambs, and, since the early 14th century, their containment within the small space of the porch, gives them an illusory sense of monumentality.

47 Reconstructing the figures' original arrangement was a central preoccupation of the earlier literature. For various proposals, see Brandl, *Skulpturen des Magdeburger Doms*, pp. 100-15.



FIGURE 2.12 Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal with the Dormition of the Virgin in tympanum and Wise and Foolish Virgins in jambs, c.1240-50, post-restoration (PHOTO: AUTHOR, 2013).



FIGURE 2.13 *Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal, left-hand jambs, Wise Virgins, en face* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

lished, with the Foolish Virgin's ornaments being smaller and plainer. The two figures' resemblance is not just superficial; they seem to have been conceived as an organic whole. It takes only minute adjustments of the bodies to imagine the Wise Virgin transformed into the Foolish in a quasi-cinematic process: the left hand must loosen its clasp on the mantle strap and rise to the face; the head must tilt gently to meet it; the right elbow must pull back just a little and the right wrist slacken; the weight of the legs must shift from the figure's left to the right side. In the graceful simplicity of their design, which lets the full contours of the bodies be traced from head to elegantly shod toes, in their refined gestural language, and in their placid demeanors, the two figures present themselves as a common baseline – a theme on which their companions will provide variations.

The physiognomic sameness of the two central figures on each side extends to the rest of the group of ten, despite slight changes in the design of their hair



FIGURE 2.14 *Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal, right-hand jamb, Foolish Virgins, en face* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

and ornaments (figs. 2.12-2.14).⁴⁸ All have oval faces with round cheeks and slightly tapered chins; long, narrow eyes with fleshy upper and lower lids; thin, smoothly arched eyebrows; straight noses; and moderately full lips with pronounced cupid's bows. This is the matrix that the sculptors manipulated as,

48 The principle of "variation on a theme" has been pointed out by many scholars, but without further discussion of the conceptual implications. For diverse outlooks on this aspect of the program, compare Hans Jantzen, *Deutsche Bildhauer des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1925), p. 186 with Ernst Schubert, *Der Dom in Magdeburg* (Leipzig, 1994), p. 202. For the importance of sameness in male programs, see Wilhelm Schlink, "... *In cuius facie deitatis imago splendet*": Die Prägung des Physiognomischen in der gotischen Skulptur Frankreichs," *Perspektiven der Philosophie*, Neues Jahrbuch 23 (1997), 425-47. The paint traces still visible on the figures reveals spectacularly bright color and ornamentation, but even here there is no pattern distinguishing the two groups; see the recent conservation report by Thomas Groll and Claudia Böttcher in *Die Paradiesvorhalle am Magdeburger Dom: Baugeschichte und Restaurierung*, Kleine Hefte zur Denkmalpflege 6 (Halle an der Saale, 2014), pp. 27-74.



FIGURE 2.15 *Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal, faces of Wise (top) and Foolish Virgins (bottom), arranged as a sequence of progressive emotional responses. The figures do not appear in this order on the jambs – but, remarkably, the figures composing each vertical pair in this grid occupy matching positions on opposite sides of the doors. They seem to have been conceived as pairs sharing a similar “pitch” of expressivity (PHOTOS AND MONTAGE: AUTHOR).*

from one figure to another, they demonstrated the face's slow progress from quiet contentment to exuberant joy on the one side, and from reflective melancholy to abject despair on the other. (Figure 2.15 brings together frontal views of all the faces, and arranges them from lowest to highest pitch of expressivity. Although the figures do not appear in this order on the jambs, it is noteworthy that each Wise-Foolish pair that emerges vertically on the grid in fact corresponds to the groupings across the two splays: the two mildest figures both occupy the central position on each side, the two most exuberant stand in the fourth position from the door, etc.)

The women's bodies are also identical to one another, marked by svelte physiques with small breasts, tapering waists, and relatively full hips accentuated by low-slung belts and long skirts. The contours of the bodies are readily apparent in both clusters of figures, as they all are garbed in identical courtly costumes, and they wear them the same way, allowing the cloaks to fall in such a way as to reveal their slinky dresses. This is a remarkable break from pictorial conventions, as we have seen, where the women's identities were encoded in their contrasting costumes. Nor do any of the figures appear to either move toward or away from the doors, or do anything else to cast them into the action of a didactic narrative.

In the Magdeburg porch, a viewer does not scan the jambs in order to understand and then render judgment on morally predetermined figures. Nor is the act of judgment suggested in the tympanum, which now, in its early 14th-century iteration, shows the Assumption of the Virgin but originally featured an enthroned, frontally positioned *Sponsus* and *Sponsa* – the bridal couple toward whom the Virgins in the story strove.⁴⁹ Instead of having the judgment predicted for her, the viewer, encompassed by a crowd of equally elegant and beautiful clones, is made to examine them closely and flesh out their moral significance through their relations with each other and with herself. This significance emerges strictly from the expressive behavior of the women's bodies and faces. They are arrayed in such a way that, no matter where a viewer stands within the porch, at least one figure on each splay is looking straight at her – Rilke's line "*da ist keine Stelle, die dich nicht sieht*" applies here quite literally (fig. 2.16).⁵⁰ Here the plasticity of the body's design, mastered by sculptors in

49 See Brandl, *Skulpturen*, pp. 124-36 for the enthroned couple; and, for the dynamics of movement suggested by the Assumption tympanum, Jacqueline E. Jung, "Dynamic Bodies and the Beholder's Share: The Wise and Foolish Virgins of Magdeburg Cathedral," in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, eds. Kristin Marek, Raphaële Preisinger, Marius Rimmele, and Katrin Kärcher (Munich, 2006), pp. 135-60 at pp. 156-58.

50 From Rainer Maria Rilke, "Archaischer Torso Apollos," discussed in Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 267-87.



FIGURE 2.16 *Magdeburg Cathedral. North transept portal, with viewer exploring sightlines linking her to different Wise and Foolish Virgins and confirming that “Da ist keine Stelle, die dich nicht sieht”* (PHOTOS: AUTHOR, 2013).

France during the first quarter of the 13th century, indeed contributes to a plasticity of perception and response, as Jaeger suggested.⁵¹ The multiple orientations of bodies, accomplished by subtle inflections of torsion and contrapposto as well as the directionality of heads, enables viewers to register diverse compositions from any given standpoint.⁵² She can choose which figures to focus on, and feel addressed by them variously. The only major distinction among the figures lies in the emotional variations of their faces and bodies – variations that ripple among the figures on each jamb, and that clash across the space of the portal, as one looks from one side to the other. Confronting – and, more important, *confronted by* – the figures within a single confined space, a viewer unavoidably becomes the living center and focal point of the scene. Whether she “must change her life” remains for her own conscience to decide.

By being all cast from the same mold, with no material accessories or features to distinguish them in moral terms, the Wise and Foolish Virgins collectively form a kind of charismatic “every(wo)man” – a character of high social status, youth, and beauty, and one whom, at least in her baseline form, viewers could admire, desire, and seek to emulate. In that respect the sculptures resemble their counterparts in the vernacular dramas that were being performed in central Germany by the early 14th century (and almost certainly earlier).⁵³ In her analysis of characters in the two extant versions of the Play of the Ten Virgins (*Zehnjungfrauenspiel*) from Eisenach, Linda Senne concluded that each set of characters, *prudentes* and *fatuae* alike, comprised “constituents of one individual’s psyche,” their voices combining to produce representations of hope, on the one hand, and, on the other, “foolish presumption” leading to despair.⁵⁴ But a major difference persists between the version of the story enacted over time by living performers and that set, quite literally, in stone: the drama of the Virgins shows the behaviors and intentions that led to the wom-

51 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, p. 346.

52 For further discussion of these tendencies, see Wilhelm Vöge, “Vom gotischen Schwung und den plastischen Schulen des 13. Jahrhunderts” (1904), in *Bildhauer des Mittelalters*, pp. 98-109; Roland Recht, “Torsion und hanchement dans la sculpture gothique,” *Gesta* 15 (1976), 179-84; Robert Suckale, “Die Bamberger Domsulpturen: Technik, Blockbehandlung, Ansichtigkeit und die Einbeziehung des Betrachters,” *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 38 (1987), 27-82.

53 Karin Schneider, ed., *Das Eisenacher Zehnjungfrauenspiel* (Berlin, 1964); Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (Oxford, 1933), vol. 2, pp. 361-96.

54 Linda P. Senne, “The Dramatic Figure in *Das Spiel von den Zehnjungfrauen*,” *The Germanic Review* 5 (1976), 161-71 at p. 170.

en's ultimate outcomes, whereas the sculpture program leaves that background to the viewer's imagination. It gives us only the final scene.

Now the conventional wisdom on the Magdeburg figures, at least in the scanty Anglophone literature, holds that what we are seeing is a display of *deserts*: the elegant comportment and joyful expressions of the Wise are both cause and effect of their salvation, whereas the tearful faces and self-chastising actions of the Foolish – their lack of restraint and decorum – reveal both *that* and *why* they have been condemned.⁵⁵ But this assessment needs to be considered more closely. These Wise Virgins in fact *flout* conventions of decorum in church, grinning openly at passers-by and manipulating their draperies in ways that openly call attention to their breasts and hips.⁵⁶ They model the rules of gracious conduct of noble ladies in court scenarios, not those governing behavior of women in solemn liturgical settings. Their behavior makes sense, in this context, insofar as it demonstrates to viewers familiar with the bodily performances of courtliness the happiness and self-possession that would attend entry into heaven, where, in the symbolic topography of the church, they were about to move.

If the Wise Virgins' actions, so out of line with liturgical decorum in a literal sense, could thus be construed as appropriate to their situations, so could those of the Foolish. Especially in light of the relatively expressionless faces of French and earlier German representations of the characters, it is easy now to regard their demeanors, with their crinkled eyes and stretched-out mouths, as indeed "twisted in grotesque exaggerations of suffering."⁵⁷ But two things are important to keep in mind. First is the issue of these figures as sculptural representations. In the 1240s, the display of grief as the externalization of an inner emotion, as opposed to pain caused by the application of a force to the body from the outside, was quite new in large-scale arts, and the troupe at Magdeburg

55 On the concept of deserts in ancient and late antique ethics, see David Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London, 2004).

56 See James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago, 2006), pp. 29-44; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Woodstock, NY, 2000), pp. 140-45. For clerical anxieties about women's clothing and comportment in church, see Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death* (Philadelphia, 2008), esp. pp. 91-93 and pp. 201-03.

57 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, p. 343 see also Binski, "Angel Choir," p. 355; and Elina Gertsman, "The Facial Gesture: (Mis)Reading Emotion in Gothic Art," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36 (2010), 28-46. I am grateful to my colleague Robert Bork, who has helped me refine this point.

were operating in an experimental mode.⁵⁸ They were testing the possibilities of expressive displays on a large scale, and they clearly wanted the results to be legible. As we have seen with regard to the central Foolish Virgin, not every member of this group displays the opened lips and swollen eyes of the most extreme representatives (see figs. 2.14, 2.15). It is no accident that the two Foolish Virgins who display the most contorted expressions – and the only two who let viewers get a glimpse of their teeth – also do the most to hide their faces; one beats her forehead with the palm of her clenched hand, and the other dabs her eye with the edge of her mantle. The faces of both are lowered, and their heads are turned in the direction of their uplifted hands, obscuring any frontal view except from an awkward standpoint directly below the figure. Here, as with the two figures at either end of the line who turn their heads inward toward their companions, the heavy carving of the swollen eyelids and the deep creases around the lips help render the expressions visible despite the diverse orientations and obfuscations of the faces. This form of carving, so different from that used for the frontally positioned faces, is analogous to the sharp-edged makeup application of opera singers and ballet dancers, whose features and expressions need to be legible from a distance.

By etching the Foolish Virgins' faces with signs of grief and designing their bodies in the conventional poses of sorrow, the sculptors ensured that their sadness would be missed by no one. But as undesirable as this emotion is for those who feel it, it is crucial to remember that being sad is not the same thing as being *bad*, and these Virgins show no evidence of moral deficiencies in their display of emotion.⁵⁹ This is the second important consideration. As noted above, the two figures that show their teeth mask this partial loss of control by lowering their heads and obscuring their faces with their hands. Their com-

58 Thomas Raff, "Heulen und Zähneklappern: Gedanken zur Mimik in der mittelalterlichen Kunst," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 56, no. 105 (2002), 375-88; see also Büchsel, "Monströse Gefühle"; Kirk Ambrose, "Attunement to the Damned of the Conques Tympanum," *Gesta* 50 (2011), 1-17. The smile, as a muscular response to an inner sentiment as opposed to a sign tacked onto a human face, was likewise in an experimental mode at this time; see Binski, "Angel Choir"; and *Seliges Lächeln und höllisches Gelächter: Das Lachen in Kunst und Kultur des Mittelalters*, ed. Winfried Wilhelmy (Regensburg, 2012).

59 Quite apart from the Virgin Mary, John, and the Magdalene, whose grief at the foot of the cross was a central model of Christian piety in the 13th century, secular literature is full of charismatic characters whose sadness was regarded as noble and edifying. See, for example, Elke Koch, "Inszenierungen von Trauer, Körper und Geschlecht im *Parzival* Wolframs von Eschenbach," in *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter/ Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten (Berlin, 2003), pp. 143-58.

panions at either end of the row manage to clamp their lips together, if with evident difficulty. The effect is not unlike what we find in contemporary representations of John the Evangelist at the foot of the cross, such as that in nearby Naumburg Cathedral, where the apostle strains to hold his lips together even as his eyebrows flex upward in a surge of emotion (fig. 2.17).⁶⁰ The central Foolish Virgin, as we have seen, exemplifies less inner turmoil than a kind of stoic regret (fig. 2.11b). In her, as in all her companions, the hand gestures are highly conventional, running the gamut of motions associated in 13th-century art and literature with proper expressions of grief.⁶¹ No tearing of hair, rending of clothes, or scratching at bared flesh – all equally familiar forms of *immoderate* grief in medieval romance literature and in pictorial depictions of the Damned in hell – is even hinted at here.⁶² Nor does any of the figures drop her lamp, let her headgear slip off, or allow her knees to buckle, as will happen in slightly later Virgins programs at the cathedrals of Strasbourg and Erfurt (fig. 2.18).⁶³ Despite their evident distress, the Magdeburg women hold it together.

And even if they didn't – even if they lost control of their bodies while in the throes of anguish and remorse – would that be so condemnable? These are, after all, persons who have just lost all chance of entering heaven. What is proper behavior under such circumstances? We do not need to concoct voices to answer this question, for the contemporary dramas of the Ten Virgins allow the women themselves to describe their woe and its manifestations. “Now

60 Krohm and Kunde, eds., *Naumburger Meister*, vol. 2, pp. 904-08.

61 See Erhard Lommatsch, “Darstellung von Trauer und Schmerz in der altfranzösischen Literatur,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 43 (1923), 20-67; Wilhelm Frenzen, *Klagebilder und Klagegebärden in der deutschen Dichtung des höfischen Mittelalters* (Würzburg, 1936); Heinz Gerd Weinand, *Tränen: Untersuchungen über das Weinen in der deutschen Sprachen und Literatur des Mittelalters* (Bonn, 1958). For a veritable catalog of 13th-century grief acts, see Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Diu Crône: Mittelhochdeutsche Leseausgabe mit Erläuterungen*, ed. Gudrun Felder (Berlin, 2012), pp. 190-91.

62 Loosening and tearing of the hair figured as an expression of deep grief since antiquity – see Mosche Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York, 1976) – but was seldom performed by elevated characters in medieval representations. In Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius*, lines 3308-12, a fisherman who discovers the dark secret of the hero's identity claws at and tears his hair, gestures mocked by the narrator. Here excessive emotive displays are directly associated with socially low characters, a tendency discussed by D.A. Wells, “Gesture in Hartmann's *Gregorius*,” in *Hartmann von Aue: Changing Perspectives*, ed. Timothy McFarland and Silvia Ranawake (Göppingen, 1988), pp. 159-86 at pp. 179-81.

63 Frank Matthias Kammel, *Kunst in Erfurt, 1300-1360: Studien zu Skulptur und Tafelmalerei* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 74-80; Helga Scieurie, “Die Erfurter Jungfrauen und ihr Publikum,” *Bildende Kunst* 5 (1989), 50-51.



FIGURE 2.17
*Naumburg, Cathedral of
 Sts. Peter and Paul. Detail
 of St. John Evangelist from
 the Crucifixion portal on
 the west choir screen,
 c.1245-50, showing facial
 features distorted by the
 difficulty of controlling
 extreme anguish (PHOTO:
 AUTHOR).*

wring your hands,” they implore the audience after all their tearful entreaties to Christ for clemency have gone unheeded, “and cry out in misery!”⁶⁴ “Now shout and tear out your hair!”⁶⁵ These are strong and radical displays of grief, evidently deemed appropriate for both characters and their empathetic onlookers. Again and again, viewers were made to oscillate between compassion (feeling *along with* the characters, as in the lines above) and outright pity (feeling *for* the characters from a detached standpoint).⁶⁶ “Now lament, all you

64 Schneider, ed., *Eisenacher Zehnjungfrauenspiel*, 41, text A (mid-14th century ms.), lines 414-15: “Nû wyndit alle vwer hende/ vnd clagit dez enelende!”

65 *Ibid.*, 42, A: l. 428: “Nu schrigit, roûfit uz dy har!”

66 See David Konstan, “From Classical Pity to Christian Sympathy: The Evolution of a Moral Sentiment,” paper presented at the New England Medieval Conference, Rhode Island School of Design, Nov. 9, 2013; Anthony Keaty, “The Christian Virtue of Mercy: Aquinas’ Transformation of Aristotelian Pity,” *Heythrop Journal* 46 (2005), 181-98.



FIGURE 2.18 *Eufurt, Cathedral of St. Mary. Triangular porch on north transept, northwestern face, right-hand jamb, with Foolish Virgins, c.1320-30 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

poor folks, that we were ever even conceived of!”⁶⁷ “Weep for our misfortune, you dear people, and guard yourselves well!”⁶⁸ Sometimes the Virgins underscore the mimetic connection between the audience and themselves: “Now weep, you poor ones, greatly! ... For *we* weep as much as there is water in the sea.”⁶⁹ And at one point they even make explicit what the mirroring structure of such exhortations had only implied: “Now listen, good people, who are now alive: we are given to you as a mirror so that you take us as an example (*daz ie bilde by vns nemet*, literally, that you take us as an image), and wait busily while you still live.”⁷⁰

These dramatic representations are charismatic in the extreme. They invite identification and then use that sense of likeness to spark the desire for self-transformation in beholders. The effectiveness of the appeals these Virgins made to spectators depended not only on their words but also on their bodily presence; again and again they urge viewers to *look at* what they are doing, to *act* along with them, and thereby to *feel* their pain – a practice of empathy whose aim is to make people change their lives so as to avoid the unhappy women’s fate at their own ends. This would not have worked if the characters had not been rendered relatable, indeed appealing, early on. In keeping with the parable itself, the women do not do anything overtly bad – they are not like the piggish rich man in the corresponding dramas of Dives and Lazarus – but their neglect of the oil is explained by their carefree *Lebenslust*, manifested in a love of good food and wine, enjoyment of flowers, nature, and splendid clothes, and wish to play instead of work.⁷¹ Who, in a predominantly lay audience, could not relate?

67 Schneider, ed., *Eisenacher Zehnjungfrauenspiel*, 47, A: l. 540: “Nû clagit, armen alle, daz vnser ie wart gedacht!”

68 Ibid., 47, A: l. 543: “ie wrowen, weynit vnse vngevelle vnd hutit vch, so tût ir wol”; text B: l. 636: “weinet, ir lieben, dit vngefelle vnde hudet uch wol!”

69 Ibid., 42, A: 418-24: “Nû weynit, armen, sere!/[io geschet nvmmere/ trost noch gnade me./ owe, wy sal iz vns erge!]/ wan wy geweynen also vel,/ also wazzers ist in dem mere;/ [so hebit sich vnse weynen alrest].”

70 Ibid., 44, A: lines 470-73: “Nû horet, selgen, dy nû leben:/ wy syn vch czû eyme spigele gegebyn,/ daz ie bilde by vns nemet/ vnd wartet fliziclichen, wy ie lebit.”

71 Ibid., pp. 17-31 includes references to the Foolish Virgins’ lackadaisical attitude toward spiritual preparation and their attachment to worldly fun. This attachment to pleasure parallels that of six out of seven of the prospective brides in the early 14th-century “Little Book of the Spiritual Wedding,” written for a lay audience by a certain Conrad (perhaps Conrad Spitzer, confessor to the Hapsburg ducal family in Vienna). In this case, a series of young women are presented as negative exemplars because they do *not* wish to marry an eligible prince, citing everything from the hard work of marriage to contentment with one’s own friends and family to the wish to continue partying. In each case, the young

If the play's Virgins have no hope for themselves, their witnesses in the audience do. And the characters' calls for compassion, pity, self-examination, repentance, and preparation for the End through the cultivation of one's personal spiritual treasury (*Seelgeräte*), it becomes clear, are there not only to express the characters' despair but also to soften the audience's hearts, to spark in them the charity and fellow-feeling that formed the oil of salvation.⁷² This, in my view, was the aim of the Magdeburg sculptors when they eschewed the usual didactic tools to distinguish their Foolish Virgins from the Wise. Rather than using the figures' bodies to *justify* their damnation (for example by showing them gesticulating), the carvers created a permanent, embodied performance of *responses* to that damnation. With no indications of *why* the Foolish wound up on the wrong side, viewers had to fill in the gaps, to think for themselves about the internal flaws that could have led to their exclusion. The answers could only come from the viewers' own hearts, their own self-knowledge. This makes the Magdeburg program accord more fully with theological readings of the parable than almost any other visual representation, for it ingeniously made palpable the *invisibility* of the Foolish Virgins' faults behind their elegant exteriors, and thus highlighted the issue of interiority so vital to the story's medieval meanings. To feel compassion with the Foolish Virgins in their misery (even if that was ultimately caused by their own inner failings) is salutary in that it makes viewers part of a benevolent community who can recognize their connectedness with unfortunate others and who can take steps to avoid falling into the same situation themselves.⁷³

woman is admonished with another story illustrating why her excuse is a bad one; in each of these internal tales, the protagonists are also women, with whom the maidens are expected to identify. See Ulrich Schülke, *Konrads Bûchlein von der geistlichen Gemahelschaft: Untersuchung und Text* (Munich, 1970).

- 72 The play ends with the Foolish Virgins' dark lament that viewers can no longer help them with "spende vnde gabe" because "wy vordinet gotis czorn," but that "eyn tot baz hulfe den eyn selgerete." Schneider, ed., *Eisenacher Zehnjungfrauenpiel*, 49-50, A: lines 572-77.
- 73 For charisma as a formative factor in early Christian communities, see John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 46-51, a reference I owe to an anonymous reader. For the constructive nature of compassion, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001). For the importance of empathy to a hero's progress in high medieval poetry, see Andreas Krass, "Die Mitleidfähigkeit des Helden: Zum Motiv der *compassio* im höfischen Roman des 12. Jahrhunderts (,Eneit' – ,Eerec' – ,Iwein')," in *Wolfram-Studien xvi: Aspekte des 12. Jahrhunderts. Freisinger Kolloquium 1998*, eds. Wolfgang Haubrichs, Eckart C. Lutz, and Gisela Vollmann-Profe (Berlin, 2000), pp. 282-304; Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, "Compassio als Heldentugend am Beispiel des ,Willehalm'-Fragments: Zur Darstellbarkeit von Gefühlen in der Epenillustration," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 46/47 (1993-94): 629-40, 855-58.

Righteous Anger, Justified Sadness, and the Laughter of the Damned: The Strasbourg Virgins Revisited

A similar dynamic was at work some decades later on the program of the Strasbourg west facade (c.1280-90; figs. 2.1-5). But the interpretive challenges posed to the viewer were mitigated here by the inclusion of Christ and the Prince of the World, whose iconography and placement impose a layer of heavy-handed didacticism onto the women's nuanced expressivity.⁷⁴ Through their presence the women's status becomes associated not just with their own inner virtues but also with their affiliations with male authority figures, of whom one beckons into the church and the other leads back to the empty seductions of the world. Thus, even as the beauty and decorum of the Wise gives them a charismatic dimension that can spiritually elevate and ennoble beholders who prepare to enter the church, the addition of Christ suggests that the program's designer did not trust the women's bodies to sufficiently bear the message about moral virtue and just deserts.

A glance at the Virgins placed against the wall suggests that he had reason to worry (fig. 2.5). For we see there that the sculptors were attuned to the kind of interpretive flexibility their counterparts at Magdeburg had sparked when they chose to modify a single figural type into a series of animated responses. At Strasbourg, the Wise Virgin in the right-hand wall-niche slides a thumb under the edge of her gown's bodice in a movement only slightly more restrained than that of her flirtatious cousin on the left jamb (fig. 2.5b, right). In the outermost niche of the left wall, a Foolish Virgin, with head veiled and features calm, rests her hand on her chest in a variation of the courtly clasp of the mantle-strap that one of the Wise Virgin performs (fig. 2.5a, left). As we see in figures 2.1 and 2.5, compositional echoes link these pairs across the chasm of the portal, from the sweeps of heavy draperies across the legs and the parallel positioning of hands to the tilting of the heads and gentle restraint of the faces. If the figures on the jambs embody the distinctions in bodily appearance between those possessing virtue and those lacking it, those on the side walls reveal the *difficulty* of discerning moral qualities on the basis of dress, comportment, and expression alone. None of the Wise Virgins, after all, looks especially joyful, and the two Foolish on the side wall do not look especially

74 The original Prince of the World is now in the Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame. For these figures see Reinardt, *La cathédrale*, pp. 126-27; Van den Bossche, *La cathédrale*, pp. 127-29, 191-93; also Rudolf Asmus, "Der 'Fürst der Welt' in der Vorhalle des Münsters von Freiburg i. B.," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912), 509-12.



FIGURE 2.19 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, south portal, left-hand jambs: Prince of the World and laughing Foolish Virgin (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*



FIGURE 2.20 *Abbey church of St-Saveur in Charroux. Reliefs with smiling Foolish Virgins from a dismantled portal, c.1250* (PHOTO: AFTER WILLIBALD SAUERLÄNDER, *GOthic SCULPTURE IN FRANCE 1140-1270*, PLATE 300).

sad. It is left up to viewers to *imagine* the feelings and motives that their outward demeanors mask.

By contrast, the simpering young woman on the jamb, so eager to attract the attention of the Worldly Prince that she has dropped her lamp, leaves nothing to the imagination (fig. 2.19). She is clearly an object of derision, an anti-model. Her laughter, which exposes a row of tiny teeth, is unusual but not unique in Virgins programs: the surviving Foolish maidens who once occupied the archivolts of a portal to the former abbey church of St-Saveur in Charroux (c.1250)

likewise smile merrily and preen as they brandish their empty vessels (fig. 2.20).⁷⁵ More than their mirth per se – smiling and even light laughter could, after all, be attributes of the Elect – it is the disparity between these figures' expressions and their inverted lamps that is meant to cause *frisson*: the women laugh in the face of their own perpetual damnation.⁷⁶ Viewers of the Strasbourg program would not have lost this point, as the tympanum over the Virgins shows the Last Judgment in full swing. Like the nobleman at the far right-hand side of the contemporary tympanum over the *Fürstenportal* at Bamberg Cathedral (fig. 2.21), whose manic laughter is rendered horrifying by its juxtaposition with the demon gleefully dragging him to hell, the Foolish Virgin at Strasbourg demonstrates her inadequacy for heaven by her truly careless behavior in the face of what viewers knew was the worst possible scenario.⁷⁷

In this light, the two Virgins who accompany her on the jamb – they of the “grim glances,” sulky mouths, and graceless limbs⁷⁸ – may not be as clear in their moral expression as they seem. Their bodies are not as poised as those of their Wise sisters, but should they be? Again, these are characters who have just recognized that they are to be excluded forever from heaven. Laughter would certainly not be appropriate under such circumstances, but neither would elegant posing. As with the mournful maidens at Magdeburg, the distress these pained demeanors and gestures convey – all rendered more touching because of the women's youthful beauty and elegant attire – was a signal to every viewer: *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*. This would not have worked if the figures were subject only to viewers' moral judgment and not some modicum of compassion and sympathy.

And so the two pouting women on the Strasbourg jamb open themselves to various levels of interpretation. To be sure, as Jaeger shows, they throw the placid beauty and exquisitely calibrated comportment of the Wise Virgins into higher relief through their contrasting bearings. But this does not mean that

75 Jean-François Amelot and Marie-Thérèse Camus, *Sculptures gothiques de Saint-Sauveur de Charroux: Chefs-d'oeuvre du XIIIe siècle* (La Crèche, 2006), pp. 28-32; Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France*, pp. 508-509. The Wise, predictably, are stout matrons wrapped in gigantic mantles.

76 For the varieties of laughter in medieval culture, see especially Binski, “Angel Choir”; Karl Richard Kremer, *Das Lachen in der deutschen Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters* (Bonn, 1961); Anja Grebe and Nikolaus Staubach, eds., *Komik und Sakralität: Aspekte einer ästhetischen Paradoxie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005); Olga V. Trokhimenko, *Constructing Virtue and Vice: Femininity and Laughter in Courtly Society (ca. 1150-1300)* (Göttingen, 2014); and Wilhelmy, ed., *Seliges Lächeln*.

77 See Suckale, “Bamberger Domsulpturen,” pp. 52-55; Raff, “Heulen und Zähneklappern.”

78 Jaeger, *Emy of Angels*, p. 344.



FIGURE 2.21 Bamberg, Cathedral of Sts. Peter and George. Northern flank, "Princes' Portal" (Fürstenportal), tympanum with uncommonly exuberant Last Judgment, c.1225 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).



FIGURE 2.22 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, north (left-hand) portal, left-hand jamb with Virtues conquering Vices, c.1280-90* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

the sinuous, asymmetrical movements of the Foolish have *caused* their damnation, for their bodies, so expressive of inner turmoil, also contrast with that of their companion who laughs and preens, oblivious to the anguish that awaits her. If the mournful figures seem not to care about posing gracefully, it may be because their attention is focused on their loss of heaven rather than their appearance to onlookers. Their bodies express disarray, but this *results from* their knowledge that no joy remains to them, and expresses regret for their previous attachment to the world. Seen in this light the figures might, like those at Magdeburg, be regarded as models of proper penitence.

The idea that, at the turn of the 14th century, the tumultuous body could be understood in positive terms is affirmed in the contemporaneous portal at the northern (left-hand) side of Strasbourg Cathedral's west facade (fig. 2.2). Here



FIGURE 2.23 *Strasbourg Cathedral. West facade, north (left-hand) portal, right-hand jambs with Virtues conquering Vices* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

were find the same jerky movements, asymmetrical draperies, and harsh facial expressions – with furrowed brows, clenched jaws, and pursed lips – that characterized the two innermost Foolish Virgins, but now on eight female figures representing the *Virtues* (figs. 2.22-23).⁷⁹ Of course, the Virtues' movements are motivated by outside forces: the rise and fall of their shoulders, the bend and flex of their knees and hips, and the tilts of their heads are attributable to the vigor with which they crush their enemies, crouching Vices bedecked (in a startling inversion of conventional sartorial codes!) as matrons and nuns. And perhaps what appears graceless to us would have impressed viewers who knew

79 Van den Bossche, *Cathédrale de Strasbourg*, pp. 62-68; Reinhardt, *Cathédrale de Strasbourg*, p. 127.

the difficulty of wielding large weapons effectively while standing in a confined space. But the poses are a clear representational choice; the sculptors could have just as easily shown the conquest accomplished and the Virtues resting easy over their victims.⁸⁰ As they are, tilting their heads down toward viewers as much as to their foes, these figures challenge onlookers to follow their lead in defeating vice, even if this means summoning forth a kind of righteous anger in the process. The composition reminds us that, at least by the end of the 13th century, charismatic representations did not need to be beautiful to be ennobling: provided they included some aspirational signs (in this case, elegant court dress, vigorous bodies, youthful faces), sculpted figures could offer models not only of cool restraint but also of hot emotion that could be internalized and instrumentalized by viewers eager for spiritual re-formation.⁸¹ Here the body distorted by inner zeal becomes an aspirational goal. Stamping out vice is *hard*, these women show us, but it is possible.

The struggle of the Foolish Virgins on the neighboring portal, by contrast, is strictly internal: their foes are no one but themselves. And if their movements signify the inner disarray that caused their exclusion from heaven, as Jaeger suggests, they can be just as aptly interpreted as fitting – perhaps even understated – responses to that state. The Wise, it is true, model the proper decorum – the elegance, self-control, and *gravitas* – that was rightfully rewarded by their admittance to the wedding feast and that, in the present, attended their entrance to that celebration (even if they lacked the visible *iocunditas* that would have also been appropriate under the joyful circumstances).⁸² But the faces and bodies of the Foolish, apart from the giggling maiden, give a glimpse the inner torment that accompanies the rejection from heaven, and that too is important. Soliciting compassion, they remind all viewers of their need to reflect and change their lives. Only through the process of recognition, empathy, and self-reform can anyone hope to join the ranks of the Wise who stand,

80 For a catalog of such imagery, see *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, 2000). The modestly veiled female Virtues in the quatrefoils at the dado level of the central portal of Amiens Cathedral, from c.1235, rest comfortably on benches while little people enact the Vices in the zone below.

81 On anger as an instrument of expression and a catalyst for social action, see Gerd Althoff, “Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung: ‘Emotionen’ in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996), 60-79; Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, “Zorn gegen Gorio: Zeichenfunktion von *zorn* im althochdeutschen *Georgslied*,” in *Codierungen von Emotionen*, eds. Jaeger and Kasten; and the essays in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY, 1998).

82 Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, pp. 168-73.

already prepared, on the other side. If the Wise display the end result of the process of inner reform, the Foolish show viewers how to get there.

Thus neither at Strasbourg nor in the earlier program at Magdeburg, where all overdetermining elements were dispensed with and the message was really borne by the bodies alone, can the Wise and Foolish Virgins be reduced to simple allegories of Virtue and Vice. Like the “goddesses” of medieval culture that Barbara Newman has taught us to recognize, they are *tools to think with*.⁸³ But one does not read these figures on a page, or in conjunction with texts, to explore erudite theological or natural philosophical concepts that are otherwise difficult, or even dangerous, to articulate in words. One encounters them in real space, quite literally looking up to them, as one prepares to cross a threshold that one knows to be the driving force behind the figures’ responses. And one uses them to feel a range of emotions – from outright joy through shades of contentment into melancholic regret all the way to crippling despair – that will prompt self-reflection and let one know that the passage from world into church is a grand and mighty thing. Of course, in the later 13th and 14th centuries, when Virgins portals enjoyed their heyday, what people found beyond the doors really were the largest and most splendid architectural interiors they would likely have ever seen: soaring vaulted spaces, brightly painted, bedecked with textiles, and dazzlingly, if not always brightly, illuminated – spaces of stunning magnificence and splendor.⁸⁴ The Virgins prepared them to encounter these with appropriate dignity, grace, and inner joy. So, too, they prepared people to leave that zone and return to the world carrying “the brightness of glory” they had experienced there in the vessels of their hearts, perhaps even a bit more prepared than they would have been to share their *caritas* with those outside with sincerely generous intent. Though fixed in stone themselves, the Virgins urge the living toward a continuous process of self-reformation: the sculpting of the virtuous heart.

83 Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2003).

84 See *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), particularly Paul Binski, “Reflections on the ‘Wonderful Height and Size’ of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime,” pp. 129-56.

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Charisma and Material Culture

Paul Binski

No one can doubt the extent of medieval thought about grace in medieval theology and aesthetic speculation.¹ The related notion of charisma also has a religious origin. While the versatile Greek word *charis* (meaning variously grace, beauty, gift or charm) had been a term of rhetoric, *charisma* first entered widespread use only in the Pauline Epistles where it is rendered in Greek as “gracious gift” (*χαρίσματα*) and in the Vulgate as *gratia* or *donum ex Deo* (1 Cor. 1:7, 7:7 and 2 Cor. 1:2), and for a very long time its sense remained religious.² The *charis* of rhetoric was a value specifically of the middle or sweet style, rather than the lofty grand style; equally *charisma* was a gift of Early Christian communitarian grace. Loftiness had been spoken of by Longinus: *hypsos* was the reply of “hot” Greek religion to “cold” Roman eloquence.³ *Hypsos* and *megalogos*, sublime uplift and great-speech, are spoken of profoundly and accurately

* I am grateful to Stephen Jaeger and Alex Marr for their observations on a late draft of this paper. Early drafts were read by Noel Sugimura and Mary Carruthers.

- 1 See Martino Rossi Monti, *Il Cielo in Terra: la grazia fra teologia ed estetica* (Turin, 2008), especially pp. 25-94; and his essay “The Mask of Grace. On Body and Beauty of Soul between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages” in the present volume.
- 2 John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (New York, 2009), pp. 12-50. Other valuable essays include Stephen Turner, “Charisma Reconsidered,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3, no. 5 (2003): 5-26; and Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings, and Charisma, Reflections on the Symbolics of Power.” in *Culture and Its Creators: Essays in Honor of E. Shils*, eds. Joseph N. Ben David and Terry N. Clark (Chicago, 1977), pp. 150-71. See also Ayelet Even-Ezra, “The Conceptualization of Charisma,” *Viator* 44, no. 1 (2013): 151-68.
- 3 Longinus, so far as we know, was not known in the Middle Ages, however helpful he is to medievalists. See Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (revised Donald A. Russell), Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge, MA, 1995), at pp. 162-65 (1.4); compare James A. Arieti and John M. Crosssett, trans., *Longinus on the Sublime* (New York, 1985); and for a discussion, Donald A. Russell, *Longinus on the Sublime* (Oxford, 1964). For an investigation of the idea of a medieval sublime, see the essays gathered in C. Stephen Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics* (New York, 2010); for skepticism about the idea see Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Ser. vol. 36 (Princeton, 1990), pp. 399-400, discussed in turn by Jaeger, “Ernst Robert Curtius: A Medievalist’s Contempt for the Middle Ages,” *Viator* 47, no. 2 (2016): 367-79; and for a critique of the medieval sublime, Mary Carruthers, “Terror, Horror, and the Fear of God or Why There Is No Medieval Sublime,” in *‘Truthe is the Beste’: A Festschrift in Honour of A.V.C. Schmidt*, ed. Nicolas Jacobs and Gerald Morgan (Oxford, 2014), pp. 17-36.

both by Longinus and Augustine. But charisma was at first a collective quality, not a feature of striking individual personality. That idea is modern, formulated in Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* as the irresistible personality-type of leadership in crisis.⁴

The purchase and occasions of all these words, *charis*, *gratia*, Pauline charisma and Weberian charisma, are not exactly exchangeable. They all denote extraordinary qualities given from "on high," possessing that mysterious *je ne sais quoi*, that "unknown quantity which is yet the vital one" that Ernst Gombrich wrote of in regard to the grace of Raphael's Madonnas.⁵ But while they may all have mysterious aesthetic or psychological content, they are not equally accounts of personality; their applicability to things rather than people remains controversial (I admit a special class of problem here: images that represent people), nor do they enjoy the same moral valency. The radiant beauty and virtue of grace as a gift of God does not sit comfortably with Max Weber's fundamentally amoral idea of singular and extraordinary power, not just persuasive or charming, but hypnotic. For Weber, questions of good and evil are separable from fact and, as Reinhard Bendix says, "both very evil and very good men have exercised domination through their extraordinary gifts of mind and body."⁶ Key to Weber's extremely influential notion of charisma is the magical power of surrender, of domination, of obedience, of enthusiasm that separates this formulation of a superhuman personality type (and its outcome in the actions of others) from the theological, moderate, and cooperative senses of charisma in earlier centuries. Pre-Weberian *charis* is the quality of beauty. Weberian charisma however is the Sublime of personality in which, for all we know, the Devil has all the best tunes.

My question is whether Weber's account can now be circumvented, and whether, as a personality quality which is necessarily elusive and unstable, charisma has purchase in any exact criticism of material culture more generally, of things, natural things particularly, not people. I admit immediately that the history of animism and fetishism and the sheer power of human affect can and have brought to images almost anything conceivable. One starting-

4 Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen, 1925), vol. II, chapters 9-10; Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York, 1968); and Hans H. Gerth and Charles Wright Mills, eds., *Max Weber, Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946). A useful account of charismatic leadership is provided by Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber, an Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 298-328.

5 Ernst H. Gombrich, "Raphael's 'Madonna della Sedia,'" in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, 3rd ed. (London, 1978), pp. 64-80, at p. 79. For the expression, see Richard Scholar, *The Je-ne-Sais-Quoi in Early Modern Europe Encounters with a Certain Something* (Oxford, 2005).

6 Bendix, *Max Weber*, p. 300.

point for all such discussion, Aby Warburg's *Denkraumverlust* (identified by Gombrich as the "tendency of the human mind to confuse the sign with the thing signified"), is an aspect not simply of the "primitive" mentality but of the richness of metaphor itself.⁷ And it seems to me reasonable to argue that images (as a special class of things) can produce charismatic effect, which Mitchell describes as a secondary, reflexive image of images, or "metapicture."⁸ This cannot be refuted: but the fact that it cannot be refuted raises a question in my mind about critical method when it extends beyond images to material culture more generally, my real concern. So, in a spirit of friendly critical engagement with the topic of this collection of papers, I propose to examine, first, some aspects of the work of Alfred Gell; second, the role of bodily representation; and finally the general issue of material culture and the idea of personality.

Making Magic? Surface and Experience, Gothic Voluptuaries

It matters, first, that the main pre-Weber formulations of charisma have theological roots (indeed this may even be true of Weber's work). Whenever we reflect on the quasi-sacral quality of the sublime and the charismatic we might recall Paul Fisher's "aesthetics of rare experiences," wherein "the modern intellectual [is allowed] to hold onto covert religious feelings under an aesthetic disguise."⁹ This warning is as useful to us as it is provocative. "Enchantment" might be one way of holding onto such feelings. Only someone who led a very sheltered life could deny that wonder, fascination, and enchantment played any role, orthodox or otherwise, in medieval culture.¹⁰ But enchantment has developed a new and more general valency as a word capturing a form of expe-

7 Ernst H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London, 1972), p. 125. For recent theorization of the idea of the image's intrinsic life (*Eigenleben*) see Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Berlin, 2010).

8 My own position – that living effects are secondary properties of objects and that their understanding must be historically mediated – is close to that of William J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 5-27, at p. 10 for "metapicture."

9 Paul Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), p. 2.

10 See the useful essays by Lea T. Olsan, "Enchantment in Medieval Literature," and Carl Watkins, "Fascination and Anxiety in Medieval Wonder Stories," both in *The Unorthodox Imagination in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Sophie Page (Manchester, 2010), pp. 45-64 and 166-92 respectively.

rience of material culture.¹¹ Alfred Gell energized the term in a consciously secular way in order to think about the magical or quasi-magical power of technology, of facture. His theory of the technology of enchantment is by its own admission a form of “methodological atheism,” a virtuosic way of writing about virtuoso magical effect while ridding it of the supernatural.¹² In maintaining this Gell finds some support in the new rhetorical and aesthetic turn in the study of medieval aesthetics: it is perfectly possible to give an account of the agency of the crafted and “thinking” artwork which entails no recourse to theology or morality.¹³ Gell is no rhetorician, however: his understanding of the impact of extraordinarily wrought surfaces does not involve the rational faculty of persuasion, of softening and sweetening, but rather the harder, unanswerable, power of a kind of wizardry invested in the hand of the artist: to be fascinated is not to be persuaded.¹⁴ According to this view, what yields affect from effect is an apprehension, imperfect but powerful, of the *process* which might have made the perceived object as it appears, a sort of superior magic creating an aura of difficulty in which a sense of value lies. The artist is therefore in effect an occult technician, using craft as sorcerers use craft. We might recall that Old English senses of “craft” included “power” and “occult art.” In Gell, as the Western artist is ushered out of the front door, his shamanic avatar creeps back in through the tradesman’s entrance. Gell is not necessarily right to separate agency and aesthesis, as if works of art could be exchanged willy-nilly, regardless of their specific or particularized capacity to foster different experiences precisely as rationally-intended artifacts.¹⁵ But his interest in the psychological effect or agency of wondrous surface patterns, such as tattoos,

11 Above all in C. Stephen Jaeger’s magisterial *Enchantment: on Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012); see also Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, 2001).

12 I refer to Alfred Gell, “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, eds. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford, 1992), pp. 40-63; and Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency, an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998).

13 As an instance, Mary Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013).

14 Caroline van Eck seems to regard Gell’s theory as rhetorical in nature: Caroline Van Eck, “Living Statues: Alfred Gell’s Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime,” *Art History* 33, no. 4 (2010): 643-59; at p. 651, and Caroline Van Eck, “Groaning Paintings and Weeping Viewers: A Gellian Perspective on Visual Persuasion,” in *Speaking to the Eye: Sight and Insight through Text and Image (1150-1650)*, eds. Thérèse De Hemptinne, Veerle Fraeters, and Maria E. Góngora (Turnhout 2013), pp. 259-83.

15 See Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350* (New Haven, 2014), p. 56; and Van Eck, “Living Statues,” pp. 649-50.

still echoes in Western religious consciousness in the harsh markings known as stigmata, marvelous holes and excrescences to be kept secret such is their theophanic power.¹⁶ How, after all, were they done? Religion too had (and has) a way of crafting bodies.

Gell, though idiosyncratic in his assault on Western-style aestheticism, has a point about the effect of crafted surfaces: amazement is tied to transaction, since wonder at surface leads to greater gift-giving (i.e. it changes conduct). I find this idea enriching for my own work on an era, the 13th and 14th centuries in northern Europe, the “mendicant” centuries, when the notion of charity, typically the charity of the living towards the dead, was of such profound and general consequence for the visual arts.¹⁷ The movement of money, the economic reality often tactfully sidestepped by medieval art historians in their appraisal of cause and effect, should always be considered. Whatever Gell’s theory may entail for “being,” it does therefore make a claim about outcome in social and economic conduct.

Recent critical writing on aesthetics examines the apprehension of the agency of surfaces to foster experience and action.¹⁸ Surface and significance become one, primal, phenomenon: and it is within this primal character that charismatic effect – as an effect of the beholding imagination – is enmeshed. This phenomenon is a matter for experience as much as of discourse: it is something which has to be “lived.” The primal phenomenon may be hard or soft in its power. Charisma is a species of hard, not soft, power working forcefully, overwhelmingly, out from bodies or, it is claimed, perceived surfaces. Like love, it is beyond argument, and in this it is closer to the Longinian concept of the sublime as that which is beyond rhetoric. Great Gothic buildings can embody, I have argued, a form of Longinian *hypsos*. The aim was uplift, wonder, magnificence. To these heirs to the traditions of the ancient Wonders – man-made technological wonders – no one in the Middle Ages fell victim.¹⁹ Quite the contrary: the Aristotelian ethical dispensation of the time saw magnificence as a high ideal of conduct in life as in art patronage, reinforcing that link between human nature and idealized conduct so important in the saints’ Lives of the period.²⁰

16 See Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 194-217.

17 Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 81-117, p. 183.

18 Explored in different ways by Jaeger, *Enchantment* and Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*.

19 See Paul Binski, “Reflections on the ‘Wonderful Height and Size’ of Gothic Great Churches,” in *Magnificence and the Sublime*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), pp. 129-56.

20 I have explored this ethical dispensation connecting magnificence to temperance in Paul Binski, *Becket’s Crown, Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300* (New Haven, 2004), at pp. 41, 125-29, 142.

But, to repeat, the crafting of surfaces and bodies in the Middle Ages was in general a form of persuasion whose highest flights might produce the wonder-response, but which operated more usually by means of the insinuating surface, not least the surface of colored (or colored-seeming) sculpture or metalwork.²¹ Such effects did not exactly carry with them the grand illusions of Weberian charisma. One typically ambivalent instance in its verbal formulation is provided by Master Gregorius, a young clerk purporting to have visited Rome probably in the early 13th century, who was “drawn back” three times to a white marble statue of Venus made with such wonderful and unaccountable skill (*tam miro et inexplicabili perfecta est artificio*) that it appeared suffused with life and exerted some unknown magic persuasion (*et nescio quam magicam persuasionem*) over him. Key words in this passage are *miro artificio*, *inexplicabili*, *nescio* and the ambivalent and possibly periphrastic *magica persuasio* which, like the older senses of the word “craft,” test the boundaries around human manufacture and art’s as-if magical secrets.²² That for Gregory this image embodied the dangers, especially erotic dangers, of haunted pagan statuary is important: that power of ancient marble statuary remained a trope of fetishism into the modern era.²³ The point however is that the purpose of most medieval artists was not paralysis of the senses, the casting of spells and the evacuation of reason – which would tend to place all such events beyond sensory or verbal experience (this was a fundamental problem of medieval transcendental or mystical experience, i.e. was it an “experience” at all?) – but rather the use of technique and sensation precisely to articulate experience.²⁴ In my recent work on the imaginative feats of Gothic art I have noted instances of this kind of articulation, such object-agency, in the astounding insinuation, undulation, and winding of English 14th-century curvilinear art, as in the Lady Chapel at Ely designed around 1320 with its “nodding” ogees (double-curved arches) and carvings of the Life of the Virgin Mary (fig. 3.1). Gell would understand this intricate manufactured art of coral and color and its relation to medieval giving, fund-raising. In the multivalent notion of insinuation I spotted an opportunity for critical engagement. Within such sweetened and

21 For what follows see Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 161-229.

22 John Osborne, trans., *Master Gregorius. The Marvels of Rome* (Toronto, 1987), p. 26; see *inter alia* Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol. Ideology and Image Making in Gothic Art* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 81-87; and for a rhetorical reading, Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 194-95. It is at least worth considering that *magica persuasio* is a clerical circumlocution for “sex appeal” indicating not puzzlement but ironic moral distancing.

23 Caroline Van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence. From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 11-12, 21-22.

24 For an account of the paradoxes involved in the notion of mystical “experience” (i.e. that it is beyond sensory and rational experience and so discourse) see for instance Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995).



FIGURE 3.1 *Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel, wall arcading with ogee arches and Life of Virgin Mary above, begun 1321 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

curving forms, about which the Renaissance and later aesthetics would have so much to say, is (to use a suitably ambivalent word) secreted that most paradoxical quality, voluptuousness, the fleshy vehicle of love and affection whose counterpoise was the ascetic, itself exhibiting the most profound understanding of the crafted body. A moment ago we encountered tattoos and stigmata: St. Francis, the reformed rich kid, demonstrates the charismatic – and hence bodily – power of asceticism. He became a walking Crucifix. The superbly crafted, shimmering image of St. Mary Magdalen at Ecouis, made around 1310-20, is precisely that of a voluptuary, her endless hair a continuous surface of sheer insinuation and living ogee curves (fig. 3.2). Here, what's pointed to is the "winning wave" in the "tempestuous petticoat" – in this case of hair.²⁵ Like the statue in Master Gregorius's account, this figure is an essay in the limits of moral-aesthetic wandering to the point of *near* error, from which Mary herself, here, in eremitic exile, is retrieving herself: the sinner redeemed, error "undone," paradise regained, and all this despite the sculpted vortex of "drawn desire."²⁶ The thought and reflection necessary to the understanding of this statue as a representation specifically of Mary Magdalen, are inescapable: the image speaks of its back story. This sculpture is a seductive masterpiece of what John Foster Dulles, in the context of the Cold War, called "brinkmanship": it creates delight but also warns us by stirring complex (mixed) affects within us.²⁷

Bodywork and Conviction

Such sculptures remind us that the fundamental domain of charisma speculation is the represented body. This brings us to "body talk" in Gothic figure sculpture, the medieval body-in-art, and what Schmitt (usefully) called the "rationale" of gestures.²⁸ Its study has recently moved forwards by leaps and bounds as the power of the body, actual or crafted, has penetrated discourse,

25 Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, et al., *L'Art au temps des rois maudits: Philippe le Bel et ses fils 1285-1328*, Exh. cat. (Paris, 1998), no. 54. I cite Robert Herrick, *Delight in Disorder*, ed. Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick* (Oxford, 2013), vol. 1, p. 28.

26 For "drawn desire," see Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, pp. 59-60.

27 For a subtle account of this sort of transaction see Joseph L. Koerner, "The Mortification of the Image: Death as a Hermeneutic in Hans Baldung Grien," *Representations* 10 (1985): 52-101. For mixed affects, see the practical study by Elisabeth Reiners-Ernst, *Das freudvolle Vesperbild und die Anfänge der Pieta-Vorstellung* (Munich, 1939); and Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 80-107, 140-46.

28 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'occident médiéval* (Paris, 1990); C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels. Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 331-48.



FIGURE 3.2 *Écouis, Normandy, collegiate church, Mary Magdalen, after 1311 (Gilles Berizzi and Thierry le Mage).*

but not always in ways free of the Idealist aesthetics that saw representation as mimetic objectification or “expression.” Such theories of expression were congenial to a (still-prevalent) narrative of artistic change in the Gothic era which saw it as the product or companion of a “new emotionalism,” an “affective turn” within the history of spirituality inaugurated by theologians in the 11th and 12th centuries but absorbed rapidly into lay piety. Yet, as those who resist this narrative have indicated, this extraordinarily pervasive and basically Romantic realist vision of a nuanced “psychological” later-medieval art sits ill with much medieval artistic and textual practice which is social and disciplinary (i.e. formulaic, artificial, and traditional) rather than individual or personal (or “natural”), and in which outward physiological affects manifestly do not necessarily correspond with (anyway mixed) inward emotional states – hence the difficulty with the term “expression”: expression of what?²⁹

Key to this issue, I think, is the understanding of purpose: like all special effects of a rhetorical nature, the insinuating power of the medieval crafted body is not necessarily a means of emoting; rather, emoting is a means. As an example I illustrate the fraught, but utterly calculated and conventional, body-language of the Foolish Virgins on the cathedral portal at Erfurt in Thuringia, of c.1330 (fig. 3.3). It remains to be shown that such bodies have “expression” as their end: no less probably, their end or purpose is the attainment in the viewer of *conviction*.³⁰ Such agency is causal and social. It changes the audience’s intentions and affects by using style to create sensation which leads to delight,

29 The observations of Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty* at pp. 99, 144 are important for any rhetorical assessment of the “psychology” or “expressivity” of mimetic Gothic sculpture; for “group textuality,” Mary Carruthers, “The Sociable Text of the ‘Troilus Frontispiece’: A Mode of Textuality,” *English Literary History* 81, no. 2 (2014): 423-41, at pp. 427-29. For body eloquence see also Paul Binski, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the poetics of the Gothic Smile,” *Art History* 20, no. 3 (1997): 350-74 (for a metaphysical reading of Gothic faciality) and *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 233-59. In the latter text, which places more emphasis on the ambivalence or lack of moral and emotional transparency of Gothic images (for instance, are smiles “nice” or “nasty”?), I state (p. 258) that these new forms of image “do not fully or unambiguously embody in themselves virtues or dispositions.” This passage is unfortunately overlooked by Gertsman, “The facial gesture, which is however generally justified in its cautious estimation of ‘expressivity.’” For moral transparency in Gothic art, on the contrary, see the important pages of Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 331-48.

30 Jaeger (*Enchantment*, pp. 22-23) reminds us that charismatic reaction, however, “uncouples the critical sense... [and] also overrides personal conviction.” This point is central to the fundamental but neglected study of “realism” without reference to “sentiment” in Frederick P. Pickering, *Literature & Art in the Middle Ages* (Coral Gables, 1970), pp. 223-307, at p. 244. Pickering’s concept of conviction, though too separated from the aesthetic, anticipates Carruthers’s notion of “confident belief,” *Experience of Beauty* at pp. 14, 38, 42, 119. It is a fine antidote to a history of Gothic realism driven by an account of affect.



FIGURE 3.3 *Erfurt cathedral, portal, c.1330, Foolish Virgins (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

persuasion, confident belief, and willed (not unwilling – this is important) action. Its methods may be mimetic – a complex question to which I want to return in future studies of the culture of the Gothic sculpted portal – but in so far as they are mimetic they are also fundamentally artificial, as artificial, arguably, as the emotions and ethics they are purported to convey (contrary to Romantic and post-Romantic “realist” models). So the end of this creation of sensation is not calculated and cold-blooded “arousal” of feelings but the direction of the audience’s inclinations, beliefs, and judgments, not so much closing off as guiding interpretative options, showing us “how.” As such they are a means of indicating, of emphasizing and pointing. Such indication or guiding is characteristic of both the figurative and the ornamental aspects of this art.³¹ That which is striking, attractive, or human-seeming is deployed as a *technique* in order both to produce *and* guide a thinking response, a dynamic and far from dispassionate form of agency: I mean specifically the thinking-through of a problem according to a path, a narrative of understanding in the light of *evidentia*. Many of the non-verbal arts, music especially, use (and generally have used) aesthetic calculation (i.e. art) to indicate the way forward in this way, particularly when they combine with and showcase the verbal.³² But sculpture differs in its palpability: as Quintilian notes very helpfully, display oratory precisely sets out its wares as if for their “handling” by the audience (his chosen verb for this is *pertracto*).³³ So I use the word “indicative” quite deliberately: to indicate is to point to knowledge by causally directing desire in the form of intentions, not representing psychological states. Mood can radically affect, but cannot push aside, meaning, for experience, sensation, thought and

31 On the theoretical aspect of this see Mary Carruthers, “The Concept of *ductus*, or Journeying through a Work of Art,” in Mary Carruthers, ed., *Rhetoric beyond Words. Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 190-213. For ornament, Jean-Claude Bonne, “De l’ornement dans l’art médiéval, VIIe–XIIe siècle; le modèle insulaire,” in *L’image: fonctions et usages des images dans l’Occident médiéval*, eds. Jérôme Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt, 6th International Workshop on Medieval Societies, Centro Ettore Majorana (Paris, 1996), pp. 207-49.

32 Carruthers, “The Concept of *ductus*.” For a musicological instance see Peter Williams, *J.S. Bach, A Life in Music* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 373-74: “In maturer works of Bach, it seems appropriate to find another verb than ‘express’: the music is not expressing a particular word or idea but marking or underlining it, a kind of audible form of *nota bene!* An example would be at *sepultus est*, ‘was buried’, in the B minor Mass: the change of mode at this point draws attention to the words and what is to follow, but in no clear way does it express grief, awe, subdued terror, despair or anything else ... rather it creates an air of expectancy by musical means ...”

33 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII.iii.11-12, trans. H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1921), vol. 126, pp. 216-17.

ultimately judgment are not readily separable.³⁴ Rhetoric teaches us that within the Christian moral dispensation, that which is dramatized in church sculpture is not dazzling or enthralling experience (beyond choice or will, and so responsibility) but precisely the issue of mindful choice and so intention itself: for Cicero the audience may be hearers, but they are also arbitrators.³⁵

This point may be pressed forward in order to underline the risks of charismatic analysis of form without regard to “occasion,” that is to say the context or purpose of an image. An important reason for stressing the socio-aesthetic character of such agency is that by doing so, we may ameliorate the disjunction, inherited from Idealist aesthetics, between experience and meaning, between that which pleases and that which signifies: the interest of art as a *tercium quid* lies precisely in its active negotiation between these polarities.³⁶ Also, as I and others have suggested elsewhere, perhaps controversially (though in line with Schmitt’s “rationale”), rational constraint is at least as important to the intention of these artifacts as the long-familiar narrative of emotional liberation, of the triumph of “romance” and its “imitation,” often associated with Gothic art. Such arts were courtly, restrained, before they were emotive: paradoxically perhaps, the history of this process was the history of a certain sort of asceticism, of self-curtailement, identified with the “civilizing process.” Constraint – a complex of social, ethical, and aesthetic factors – is the *a priori* of aesthetic liberation and the realist embodiment of *moralitas*.³⁷

Faces matter here. The extremely tricky study of faces, actually a minefield, has a particular importance for the assessment of charismatic power because the face is that which seems most nearly to break down the barrier between person and image. The face delivers, it helps: *vultus adest*.³⁸ Stephen Jaeger

34 Models of “presence” are thus anti-hermeneutic in their outcome, see for instance Hans U. Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, 2004); also Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime*. For limitations to the concept of expressivity, and also for desire and intention, Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 35-41, 48, 51, and 61.

35 Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, 111.10, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 349 (Cambridge, MA, 1942), at pp. 318-19.

36 I have made a practical case for this negotiation throughout Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, in response to the theories of Belting, Freedberg, and Gell, who seem to me needlessly skeptical about the role of “art” in the formation of the theories of function and response which they themselves advance.

37 On which themes see Jaeger, *Envy of Angels* and C. Stephen Jaeger, “Charismatic Body – Charismatic Text,” *Exemplaria* 9, no. 1 (1997): 117-37; and Binski, *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 233-59. I am preparing a separate study of this point in relation to discipline of the self.

38 I cite Monika Otter, “Vultus adest (The Face Helps). Performance, Expressivity and Interiority,” in *Rhetoric beyond Words. Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 151-72.

reminds us that the Weberian notion of charisma requires a person, a psychology or personality: it was part of the critique of Weber's charisma, notably that by Arthur Schlesinger, that the concept (like any concept) should not be weakened by over-extension to the point where it loses its rationale, its strength.³⁹ There is nothing to indicate that Weber believed that charisma was a property of things (images included) rather than people or abstract institutions.⁴⁰ We might recuperate the notion of a "charm," a gift, a glittering jewel, or a precious marble magically exerting or underwriting power, from the Greek *charis*; but we could not move forwards so easily from its derivative *charisma*, a specially-given but specifically human attribute of personality. To be sure, the attribution of will or purpose to natural things is well known in the Middle Ages: "the see desireth naturelly to folwen" the Moon, as Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* (lines 1052-53) puts it; materials such as iron could "honour" themselves in their contentious working and forging – an image drawn from the account of Lady Dialectic's metalworking in Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*.⁴¹ The notion of the resistance, difficulty, and willfulness of materials in craft, writing included, gets us some way towards a conception of life or the "character" (not, please note, "personality") of natural things: Michael Baxandall discusses the idea of materials having "a character to be respected" in the act of wood-crafting guided by chiromancy.⁴² But in the medieval dispensation only the stars in the heavens truly possessed life or intelligence. Still, that things could auratically *frame* charismatic power in the Middle Ages is indisputable, and is supported by the host of objects made of precious metals, jewels, and high-status stones possessing their own *virtus* and orchestrated in the service of power demonstrated or instantiated in death ritual, coronations, or other inaugurations, or the cult of relics.⁴³ Stones associated with deaths and coronations, such as por-

39 Potts provides the *reductio ad absurdum* in the form of the "charismatic sandwich," Potts, *A History of Charisma*, pp. 188-91 and pp. 130, 136, 189 for Schlesinger; and for Bourdieu, a doubter of a different type, see Potts, *A History of Charisma*, pp. 3, 5, 133, 136.

40 Potts, *A History of Charisma*, p. 121; Weber had a notion of impersonal charisma vested in human groups or offices, see Bendix, *Weber*, pp. 308-28.

41 See the discussion in Clive S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image. An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 92-94; for Alan of Lille, see *Anticlaudianus*, book 3, lines 97-105, in Winthrop Wetherbee, ed. and trans., *Alan of Lille, Literary Works* (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

42 Michael Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 32-38.

43 On this theme see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: an Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis, 2015).

phyry, exemplify this truth. The word marble itself comes from the Greek *mar-màiro* “to shine”; its association with nobility was common.⁴⁴

Faces of course can shine too: in his *Convivio*, Dante writes of the smile as a “flashing out” (*corruscazione*) of the soul’s delight.⁴⁵ Power in particular may have brightness, the brightness of a face that may be winningly pleasant, smiling, apparently (and I stress “apparently”) genial in pointing up (not expressing) noble courtliness – think of the founder-figures in the choir at Naumburg.⁴⁶ Shine is an aspect of the *splendor* of aura.⁴⁷ But the language of charismatic effect in persons has a particular somatic focus. Though it is clearly an indivisible *Gestalt* it tends to dwell on, or be captivated by, the face, especially on the eyes, less so than the body. The Latin *facies* is related to the Indo-European group of words, including *facetus*, concerning that which is well-made, fine, apparent or shining. Very often the language of charismatic effect is the language of faces, eyes, light, aura, sparkle, shine, starriness; and that perception of shifting light, of Dante’s *corruscazione* entails a subjective sense of movement, of change, of potentiality: the surface, the persona, should be illuminated but it should also alter, be active. Jaeger rightly remarks of the icon that “It is always the face that does the charisma work.”⁴⁸ Quintilian speaks of ornaments as “the eyes of eloquence,” or “the face of the spoken word”: rhetorically the eyes were agents of *enargeia*, vivid speech (Latin: *illustratio, evidentia*), and *energeia*, “actuality,” and so of evidence and judgment.⁴⁹

And how often in the literature of charisma and human captivation generally we read about the power of the eye. Here is Edgar Salin writing about Stefan George, quoted by Stephen Jaeger:

And his eyes? Suddenly the observer realized: it had been a beam of those eyes, sent to him with the speed of lightning, that had held him spell-bound, had penetrated to the innermost region of his soul.

This is the sudden flashing-out of the Longinian sublime [1.4] experienced too by the 11th-century theologian Michael Psellos in the face of an icon of the

44 Michael Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present. Building with Antiquities in the Mediaeval Mediterranean* (Leiden, 2009), at p. 7. See also Binski, *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 56-57 and *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 22-30.

45 Dante, *Convivio*, II.viii, II ed. Giorgio Inglese (Milan, 1993): *E che è ridere se non una corruscazione de la dilettazone de l’anima, cioè uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro?*

46 Jaqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen. Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200-1400* (Cambridge, 2013) for this entire class of sculpture.

47 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 128.

48 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 110.

49 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VI.II.32 and VIII.V.34, see vol. 125, pp. 434-35 and vol. 126, pp. 298-99; see also IX.I.21, vol. 127, at pp. 20-21.

Virgin Mary, depriving him of strength and reason as by a bolt of lightning.⁵⁰ These words should be noted. This flashing-out seems particularly Hellenic in origin: the goddess Charis was also known as Aglaea, or splendor. And yet – and this is a problem for our present exercise – it is also true of the modern, post-Weber, terrain of the charismatic: the iconic faces of the powerful on the silver screen and on TV, especially in close-up. Weber transformed the exceptional sublime of Longinian lightning into the daily banality of irresistible leadership: but can Weber be escaped?

Was Christ charismatic? Before Max Weber's work on economy and society, unfinished at his death in 1920, charisma in medieval and post-medieval language was specifically theological, its origins lying in the Pauline epistles, its basis Hellenic. Potts shows that its domain was communitarian: charisma was the giftedness of Christian communities, not leaders: it levelled, connected, but did not single out. Only by the 2nd and 3rd centuries did charisma become annexed to the power structure, the hierarchy, of the church and its leaders, its bishops especially.⁵¹ There was no suggestion in the early church that Christ himself was charismatic, that he possessed a certain *personality*. Nor was there early agreement as to what Christ had looked like, what his hair length and skin color were, though there was a theological agreement (and that is the point) that he possessed beauty.⁵² Yet there was patristic authority for the idea that Christ “sparkled.” It is found, for instance, in a commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, 21:15 written in AD 398 by St. Jerome (AD 347-420). The passage is that in which Christ cleanses the Temple: ⁵³

Igneum enim quiddam atque sidereum radiabat ex oculis ejus, et divinitatis majestas lucebat in facie. Cumque manum non audeant injicere sacerdotes, tamen opera calumniantur ...

Indeed a certain fiery starriness radiated from his eyes and the majesty of divinity shone in his face, wherefore the priests would not dare to lay their hands upon him, though they would condemn his works ...

50 For these see Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 277, 119 respectively.

51 Potts, *A History of Charisma*, pp. 12-83.

52 Rossi Monti, *Il Cielo in Terra*, pp. 54-62. Discussed in relation to theology and identity markers by Michele Bacci, *The Many Faces of Christ. Portraying the Holy in the East and the West 200 to 1300* (London, 2014).

53 *Patrologia Latina, Cursus completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844-64), vol. 26, col. 152; see Thomas P. Scheck, trans., *St. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew*, *The Fathers of the Church* 117 (Washington, 2008), pp. 237-38.

Any era influenced by theories of optical extramission will have a sense of the power of the eye, and yet the biblical eye is an organ not of power but of understanding or, blinded, of ignorance, as well as a source of tears. God had shone (*coruscasti*) upon Augustine, putting blindness to flight (*Confessions*, 10:27). Jerome's biblical language does not help us much, though Rev. 1.14 *et oculis ejus velut flamma ignis*, "and his eyes were as a flame of fire" might have been intended. At the Transfiguration, only one of the synoptic Gospels, Matthew 17:2, mentions Christ's face shining, not his eyes. It is rather Charon (supposedly from the noun *χάρων*, a poetic form of *χαρωπός* (*charopós*, "of keen gaze")) who has fierce, flashing, or feverish eyes (*Aeneid*, 6:298-301); it is Athena whom Homer refers to as the "goddess of the flashing eyes" (*Glaukos Athene*); and it is Seneca, who in his *De Ira* (1.1.3-4) writes of rage that it makes the eyes "blaze and sparkle": *flagrant ac micant oculi*.⁵⁴ Christ's action in the Temple is one motivated, of course, by anger. Jerome's image of him is not Weberian, but Senecan, Homeric: it is not the charisma of personality but of theology. We see gentler embodiments of it less in the earliest surviving images of Christ than in the astonishing painted mummy portraits from Roman Egypt in the first centuries AD, such as those from Fayum, portraits whose steady gazes are enlivened by the twinkle of light in the dark penetrating eyes, embers of a God-seeking potentiality.⁵⁵ It is in this flashing-out that lies the illusion of personality. And yet in Jerome's case this quality, obviously exaggerated, is manifestly theophanic. Jerome writes as if Christ "must have been" charismatic because of his face and eyes, because this flashing-out of personality is really a flashing-out of divinity, because this look *induces men not to lay hands on him*. Jerome's account of this "look" is individualistic, not communal. Charisma creates space, distance, secrecy; the ostentatious secrecy of the Transfiguration, and the secrecy of the stigmatization of St. Francis, kept from men: Christ himself needed no gift, for he was God, or so Christians believe.

Faces, then, are difficult. But they help us better to understand important points of method. Jerome's account of Christ's rage is an account of details *surface*. The close reading of charismatic effect in persons or images, however socially negotiated, must ultimately be a reading of objectively definable qualities, such that we might come to say that an icon of Christ from Sinai has

54 See the discussion in Chad Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 31, 58-60; for Jerome and Seneca, see David S. Wiesen, *St Jerome as a Satirist. A Study in Christian Latin thought and Letters* (Cornell, 1964).

55 See Susan Walker and Morris Bierbrier, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (London, 1997), pp. 100-03. Some aspects of Christ's appearance in the earliest Christian centuries, though not his countenance, are considered in Thomas F. Matthews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, 1993).

a “deeply moving personality” and also qualities which are “exhausted by a careful study of the surface,” that “everything that this painted subject is, *is there* [my italics],” in Stephen Jaeger’s words.⁵⁶ Presumably one object cannot be substituted for another: the facts about one object as opposed to another matter not just incidentally, but fundamentally. To suppose that the experience of the charismatic, or indeed of any aesthetic effect, is not formed by the ostensive appearance of an image is to undermine the very possibility of a critical method. But because thought is internal to such experiences, to witness an icon indubitably of Christ is to summon a mode of imaginative looking quite other than that entailed by the image of just anyone. The back-story matters: try substituting Judas Iscariot. There is no charismatic art without a charismatic reality “behind” it: the art of charisma is an art of contingency. But a question follows: if this is so, in what sense can charisma be said to lie *in* the artifact?

Charisma and Material Culture

So my final questions concern technology, persons, and material culture. When “charisma” replaced “prestige” as the personality-word for leadership, it also entered the realm of technology at just the time, the 1930s, when Weber’s words were translated into English and when Nazi Germany brought its power truly to light. Vulgarized, it became an Anglo-Saxon word for stardom in Hollywood, and for Kennedy’s Camelot during the Cold War and the start of the great age of television.⁵⁷ To what extent are modern notions of charisma and aura actually shaped by the moving image? Contrary to Walter Benjamin’s (early) view that “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art,” it seems to me that some iconic images, uncanny if not charismatic, precisely acquire their aura *through* mechanical reproduction, even still photography.⁵⁸ One instance would be one of the great desire-objects of the 20th century, the Turin Shroud. I myself consider the shroud to be a medieval artifact designed deliberately for styles of viewing unknown before the Middle Ages, the character of which is not charismatic (it shows Christ’s eyes as closed not open) so much as uncanny. But what produced the uncanny ef-

56 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 105-07.

57 Potts, *A History of Charisma*, pp. 108-36, 159-221.

58 Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,” in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London, 1968), p. 221. For an admirable essay on this problem see Michael Camille, “The *Très Riches Heures*: An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Critical Enquiry* 17, no. 1 (1990): 72-107.

fect, what turned this image into something so powerful? The answer surely was the moment in 1898 when the photographer Secondo Pia first saw the negatives of the photographs he had taken of it for its then owner, King Umberto I.⁵⁹ Something in the process of rendering a negative of an image produces a defamiliarization which intensifies effect, produces a haunting, at once uncanny and epiphanic. But it is not “natural,” for auratic effects are illusions which, as with the moving image, are intensified by mechanical reproduction. I think it no coincidence that it was in the era of the moving image that charisma first emerged as a widespread secular critical idea. Moving “talkie” images are the typical agents of charismatic illusion. They permit the observation, scrutiny, of conduct; they allow us to hear the quaver, or confidence, of a voice: hence the appalling vulnerability of non-media-savvy politicians on TV, the sweaty Richard Nixons not the dazzling, smooth JFKs.

Talk of illusion might suggest that I am skeptical about the whole phenomenon of charisma, but this is not so. Schlesinger was perhaps aware, or overly aware, of the risks of over-glamorizing the whole concept in the realm of the political.⁶⁰ No one denies the risks of overplaying dazzle and human personality in ordinary parlance. But it seems to me that in the fractured and cautious culture of modern humanities, talk about great effects, of that which moves us and which may even change us, restores vitality to our discussion in regard to *what* it is that educates us.⁶¹ It is an act of affirmation of the possibility that people may be great, that dazzle may be beneficial, and that (to use a Weberian idea) “depersonalization” may be destructive. To encounter a great teacher is not simply to encounter a mind moving over matter, but the working of a mind *through* a living captivating personality. As a medievalist I certainly feel alert to the ways in which agency cannot simply be returned to objects without regard to their effects on audiences in the social domain.

But within this lies precisely a question about the relation of charisma and personality which brings me to two concluding points. The first returns us to the discussion of the hard and soft power, enchantment and persuasion, religion and rhetoric. Central to the doctrine of charisma as a form of sublime are those key “Longinian” words of Psellos about an icon of the Virgin Mary noted earlier, “depriving me of strength and reason”: in the “sublime” account of charisma we do not engage, we succumb, are placed beyond reason and discourse. Such is the overwhelming power of Weber’s doctrine of leadership personality. Some might say that the danger here lies in hyperbole: that Longinus and Psellos are creating an exaggerated topical fiction of response appropriate to

59 Thomas de Wesselow, *The Sign: The Shroud of Turin and the Secret of the Resurrection* (London, 2012), pp. 18-20.

60 Potts, *A History of Charisma*, pp. 130, 133 for Bourdieu; and see Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 371.

61 This case is made eloquently by Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 370-77.

the “rare experience.” But a further point, as modern aestheticians have noted, arises from a distinction between fantasy and imagination.⁶² In this, the fantasy object, the surrogate, is the unreal object of actual desires: mimesis, literalism, are fundamental to the fantasist because the surrogate object of emotion must be as real as possible. The freedoms of thought and imaginative regard play no role in the fantasy relation because there, nothing is left to the imagination, as in pornography or waxworks, the places of true simulacra. Objects of fantasy in this regard are not *representations* but *substitutions* because true representation entails thought about a subject which distances the object and subject in a free imaginative process. Fantasy, in contrast, is literal and invasive, excludes thought, and entails the objectification of that which is subject to fantasy. Imaginative regard does not necessarily produce real emotion – for “real” emotion is the theme of fantasy and desire – but “entertained” emotion. We may for instance say of an image that it looks arousing, without actually being aroused: we may very well think about, or represent, arousal to ourselves.⁶³ In regard to the occasion and purpose of much medieval representation, I suggest, the relation of subject to artwork is more like an imaginative than a fantasy relation, because thought and judgment are absolutely integral to it. Were they not, and were such art simply intended to dazzle and so blind, the active conviction-purpose of medieval art founded in *evidentia* and *illustratio* would be undermined and with it the generally-accepted Gregorian concept of Christian art as that from which we may learn “more” (*addiscere*).⁶⁴

Here then lies a fruitful tension between the world of grand illusions of the sort we might encounter, say, in cinema – surely the place where fantasy is most readily awakened – and general aesthetic experience. My second issue is the extension of the term charisma to the critique of “living” effects, heightened or vivid experience generally. In the context of the present volume we hardly need to note that there is a longstanding tradition which maintains that images or natural things can “live,” can embody liveliness. A well-known focus of this in the Gothic era is the term “al vif,” used of the drawing of a lion in Villard de Honnecourt’s portfolio, and as likely as not meaning something not

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- 62 The idea is discussed at intervals in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London, 1817), but is explored further by Roger Scruton, “Fantasy, Imagination and the Screen,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 19 (1983): 35-46.
- 63 Arthur C. Danto addresses this issue by distinguishing between “transeunt” and “immanent” representation, see Danto, review of Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, in *Art Bulletin* 72, no. 2 (1990): 341-42, at p. 342.
- 64 Celia M. Chazelle, “Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I’s Letters to Serenus of Marseilles,” *Word & Image* 6, no. 1 (1990): 138-53, at p. 140: *Aliud est enim picturam adorare, aliud per picturae historiam quid sit adorandum addiscere.*

depicted *from* life, but brought *to* life.⁶⁵ Presence, animacy, vividness, vitality, quickness, are historically familiar critical terms, metaphors, which entail no necessary beliefs about (though they may have unsettled) the ontological standing of things. The use of the transferred epithet, shifting qualities of people over to artifacts or natural things, is a widespread and sometimes helpful maneuver in overcoming the art-life split. Not everyone found this fact of life attractive: John Ruskin criticized the “pathetic fallacy”; extreme versions of the “presentist” case are animism and fetishism; sophisticated versions are to be found within the so-called *Bildakt* and the neo-vitalism of eco-criticism.⁶⁶ But it is not my task here to argue against the “excessive image” and the entire political economy of the post-humanist image. My point is simpler: of the various accounts of grace and giftedness familiar to us in Western thought, only the Weberian version seems to entertain anything like a concept of personality. Yet Weber, as already indicated, seems not to have extended this idea of personality beyond the analysis of persons and human institutions into the domain of material culture more generally. The idea of personality should not, to my mind, be conflated automatically with the idea of living presence in material culture. Charisma in the Weberian sense is an emergent aspect of personhood. Ancient rhetorical tradition laid emphasis not just on words, or looks (*vultus*) as sources of persuasive power, but on their combination with gesture (*actio*): by word, look, and action, through *enargeia*, the orator gives a total idea or image of a life lived. To perceive a charismatic totality, a *Gestalt*, we must witness not the image of the orator, or hear the words of the orator, but also behold the orator in action and witness the orator in context. Quintilian (perhaps in a conscious deprecation of his art) saw in this totality of voice and action an analogy to the power of motionless painting and an indication of the limitation of speech, but some early writers, such as John the Grammarian,

65 Noa Turel, “Living Pictures: Rereading ‘au vif’, 1350-1550,” *Gesta* 50, no. 2 (2011): 163-82.

66 The literature on this topic is very substantial. For the *Bildakt*, see Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts*; for an eco-critical blurring of human and non-human agency, drawing on Spinoza, and Deleuze and Guatari, see Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*. For the power of images see most recently Van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence* with copious bibliographical support, and Van Eck, “Living Statues”; for different perspectives see Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*; Bill Brown, ed. “Things,” Special issue of *Critical Enquiry*, 28, no. 1 (2001); Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*; Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, 2006); and David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989). For a penetrating review of the latter stressing the limitations of images not their powers see Ernst H. Gombrich, “The Edge of Delusion,” *New York Review of Books* 15 (1990): 6-9. For the pathetic fallacy, see John Ruskin, “Of the Pathetic Fallacy,” *Modern Painters*, 3, pt. 4 (Chapter 12) (London, 1856).

thought that images were less effective than texts at conveying a whole personality.⁶⁷

Personality charisma is an elusive aspect of conduct, but it is more than an effect. It is not simply vividness or expressiveness, or liveliness. Nor is it instantaneous, but changing and apprehended in time. It is a thing lived. We *look* at images of people but do not *observe* them in the way we observe the behavior of actual persons. Of course, we bring to images claims, desires, expectations which have an interpersonal character: in this sense images, as Michael Baxandall puts it, “admit” intimations of character and feeling rather than “initiate” them. It is for this reason that limits cannot readily be placed on “seeing in” things, images included, certain qualities that may be psychological, as an activity of imaginative beholding.⁶⁸ But while the charismatic image may indeed have eyes, it cannot gaze at us in the way we might gaze at it. While we may treat objects as persons, gifting them with power, as a rule we do not treat persons as objects, because persons are rational, embodied, and self-conscious, not objects: this is why animacy and inanimacy cannot (and should not) be split off from being alive or not alive.⁶⁹ Sartre’s extraordinary discussion of the gaze in *Being and Nothingness* explains why. If we meet a person’s glance it is difficult to look them *in* the eye, or more specifically *at* the eye, because the eye is absorbed into the person’s glance: “If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes ... the Other’s look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them.”⁷⁰ So what we see is not an eye but a person looking back, a gaze: we become the object of another’s intentions. In apprehending the gaze of a living embodied person, I recognize an intention and a possibility for action towards me – the person “intends” *me*. To look through the person’s glance, at the eye as a material thing, is in contrast to insist that we are the subject, the person the object. Looking and being looked at by another person are aspects of the formation of self-consciousness: intentions in people are not separable from

67 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, XI.3.67, at vol. 494, pp. 118-19. Of the rhetorical theoreticians, Quintilian is the most prone to relate painting and poetry (see variously *Institutio oratoria* II.17-18, VIII.5, IX.3, XII.3-9 etc.). See also Verity Platt, “Agamemnon’s Grief. On the Limits of Expression in Roman Rhetoric and Painting,” in *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, eds. J. Elsner and M. Meyer (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 211-31 at pp. 211-12, 231; Bacci, *Many Faces of Christ*, p. 157.

68 Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, p. 152. On this complicated matter see the fundamental reflections on “seeing as” and “seeing in” in Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 205-26, and the review of Wollheim’s book by Michael Podro, *The Burlington Magazine*, 124, no. 947 (Feb., 1982), 100-02.

69 See however Gell, as discussed by Van Eck, “Living Statues,” p. 648.

70 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London, 1957); see also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London, 1989), pp. 360-61.

human self-consciousness and action (being alive). This is not to deny a different point: that works of art or texts embody intentions as artifacts which “move towards” something (from the Latin *intendere*: to aim) yet which lack consciousness.⁷¹ Here we may speak of *agency*, but not *will*. It is simply to persist with the thought that in our critical language we should no more regard things – and I mean especially natural things – as embodiments of personality than we should regard them as embodiments of morality. With images, in contrast, there is always a grey area to be savoured.

In arguing this, I want to retain the ontological specialness of human agency while fully admitting the force, the agency of natural things and artifacts, images included. Art is precisely where these agencies negotiate; and it is above all the discursive agency of persons, not things, which brings this to light in the first place. Contrary to some recent interpretative trends, the gap between natural thing and person is not just significant but important: to allow charisma to embrace general notions of the imaginative beholding of life in things may be to weaken the concept to the point, not that we overemphasize the living nature of objects, but that we risk objectifying persons possessed of life and consciousness.⁷² Weber’s apparent caution on this point is hard to circumvent. If charisma is a quality of things, no matter how complex, it is because it is we who have gifted them with that quality. To maintain this distinction between seeing and observing, stasis and time, person and thing is above all to celebrate the power of charisma as a human possibility.

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- 71 Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 51-54 for object-intention and *intentio auctoris*. Often the notion of intentionality works outwards from subject to object so that mental states have “intentional objects.” On this very difficult point, which attempts to retain the link between intentionality and consciousness in the face of arguments in favor of the intentionality of the non-conscious, see *inter alia* John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay on the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 1983).
- 72 I allude here to the decision to dissipate “onto-theological binaries” in Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. x; Bennett sets out a case for “vibrant matter” derived in part from Deleuze and Guattari in which the power of things is impersonal, an “affect intrinsic to forms that cannot be imagined (even ideally) as persons” (*Vibrant Matter*, p. xii). It is striking to what extent this reiterates long-established thinking about the agency of form and artifact in art-historical discourse, a discourse which is not sufficiently acknowledged in eco-criticism.

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PART 2

Charismatic Art



Charismatic Art and Biography in the Carolingian World

Andrew Romig

As long as the charismatic figure is present, his reproduction in art is not necessary. Copied semblances are substitutes; the living model is far more efficacious than the spoken or written word, as Seneca had claimed. Petrarch, in a letter in defense of learning by example, would reiterate the priority of the lived presence precisely compared with the charismatic force of sculpture: 'If the statues of illustrious men can ignite noble minds to the zeal of imitation ... how much more does virtue itself exercise this influence, being put forward not in shining marble, but in a living example. It may be that the lineaments of bodies may be expressed more forcefully in statues, but the awareness of deeds, of manners, and of the attitudes of mind are undoubtedly expressed more completely and more perfectly in words than in sculpture.' (Petrarch, *Epistolae familiares* 6.4). The death of the charismatic figure generates the need to recapture and hold firm his image. It is passed along through those nearest the master, who become, as it were, living contact relics. Then that force too fades. Finally writing and effigies become the transmitters. Charismatic representation emerges when the sensed force of living presence weakens.¹



Inspired by Stephen Jaeger, who for more than three decades has been among the most creative and provocative interpreters of high medieval intellectual culture, I would like to ruminate here upon the charisma of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne, both in life and, especially, in art. Charlemagne's personal charisma in the Weberian sense of the term has been at the foundation

¹ Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 160.

of his historical and his legendary reputation since soon after his death in 814.² His capacity to command and to inspire the awe of those around him was crucial, historians have argued, to the control that he was able to maintain over the vast expanses of European territory that he conquered, centuries before the development of the technologies of administrative government that we associate with the modern state. And his charismatic reputation has only been enhanced by the fact that his empire collapsed within a single generation after his passing. For the next ten centuries, Charlemagne's charisma would serve as the counterexample for the charisma that his son and sole heir, Louis the Pious, supposedly lacked. Louis, *roi faible*, historians would write, had no charisma; he was unable to command and to cultivate the interpersonal loyalties on which "premodern" government relied, and thus could not keep centrifugal forces at bay. Only in recent decades have historians finally begun to challenge and to rewrite this thousand-year-old narrative of Carolingian power.³

Charlemagne's charismatic remembrance developed precisely as Jaeger describes in the lines quoted above. While Charlemagne was living, there was almost no reproduction of him in art. A handful of panegyric poems and annalistic histories written by courtiers conveyed highly-constructed portraits of Charlemagne's kingship. Yet the projection of his image beyond the court, particularly his pictorial image, appears to have been remarkably minimal during his lifetime. Whereas the emperors of old Rome sought to bombard their subjects with public displays of imperial cult imagery, the bounties of which we now enjoy in the classical-era wings of our art museums, Charlemagne seems to have produced no pictorial images while he was alive other than coinage and royal *bullae*, and these very late in his reign. Only the coins remain truly extant.⁴ They depict the emperor in profile, with round face, thick neck, and prominent nose, wearing the Roman toga and laurel wreath, along with the

2 For Weberian concepts of charismatic leadership, see especially the collection, Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1968).

3 See especially Courtney Booker, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, 2009), for his detailed history and shrewd dismantling of this traditional narrative.

4 Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751–877)* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 208–23. Our main evidence for Charlemagne's *bullae* comes from a late-17th-century antiquarian's sketch. Garipzanov argues against previous scholarly assessment, most notably Percy Ernst Schramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit, 751–1190*, ed. Florentine Mutherich (Munich, 1983), that images of Charlemagne began to appear on imperial coins no earlier than 813. Louis the Pious followed this minting tradition for only a short time, discontinuing the practice after 818.



FIGURE 4.1

Obverse of a Charlemagne denier, coined in Frankfurt circa 813, now at the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris.

(<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlemagne_denier_Mayence_812_814.jpg>, accessed 28 November 2017.) PHOTO: PHGCOM.

distinctive short hair and mustache of the Carolingian royal line.⁵ It is a stylized portrait of old meeting new. Whether it enchanted its contemporary viewers is impossible to know. Yet when compared to the exaggerated, even cartoonish portrayals that emerged and became popular after Charlemagne's death, it is difficult to describe the contemporary image as anything more than modest.

Perhaps, as Jaeger suggests for charismatic cultures, Charlemagne's living presence simply left no need for aggrandizement. After 814, however, as the character and tenor of the Frankish world began to change dramatically, so too did Charlemagne's public image. Einhard wrote his famous biography of his liege and friend during the late 820s.⁶ In the decades and centuries that followed, artists working in every medium from language to pigment to wood to stone would attempt to depict the aura of majesty that Charlemagne allegedly radiated in life. European rulers would call upon these images in the dedication of their monastic houses and churches, in the patrimony and authentication of their most precious relics, and most of all in their attempts to arrogate politi-

5 Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York, 2004), pp. 3-42, especially pp. 24-25. Garipzanov suggests that some viewers may even have recognized in the laurel wreath an ancient symbol for *pax* – peace – and thus perhaps a reference not only to the classical past but to Carolingian ideals of royal peacemaking; see Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority*, pp. 212-13; for Charlemagne as *rex pacificus*, see also Paul Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 158-73.

6 Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger (Hanover, 1911), pp. 69-130. For Einhard's career and the history and dating of this text, see especially Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard* (Toronto, 1998), pp. xi-xli.

cal and social authority by binding themselves to his ancient bloodline.⁷ Charlemagne's legend waxed as his living memory waned.⁸

No image of Charlemagne represents this evolution more clearly than Albrecht Dürer's portrait, dated c.1512, now preserved at the Germanisches Museum in Nuremberg. Commissioned by the Nuremberg city council in 1510, it was originally part of a diptych that set Charlemagne in mirrored opposition to the Emperor Sigismund (d. 1437). The two halves were ultimately exhibited separately, however, a decision that seems to have been made quite early in the history of their display; and when viewing the portraits in juxtaposition, it is not difficult to guess the reason why. Charlemagne towers with regal ease over the slouching, slinking, paunched, and scowling Sigismund (see figs 9.5a-b). The inscriptions which frame the portraits explain that Charlemagne made German the entirety of the Roman Empire in half the time of Sigismund's reign. Sigismund's exploits, in comparison, were good patronage of Nuremberg and the porting of the imperial relics from Prague (relics, predominantly, of Charlemagne himself).⁹

Regardless of whether Dürer's depiction was an honest representation or a cruel artist's joke played on his Nuremberg patrons, the image demonstrates just how little resemblance Charlemagne's later portrayals bore to the comparatively humble likeness that had been stamped onto his royal coinage. By

7 See especially Stephen G. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven, 1983); Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993); Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford, 2011); Anne Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

8 For important surveys of the early components and development of this legendary remembrance, see Thomas F.X. Noble, "Greatness Contested and Confirmed: The Raw Materials of the Charlemagne Legend," in *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, eds. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey (New York, 2008), pp. 3-22; Paul Edward Dutton, "Karolus Magnus or Karolus Felix: The Making of Charlemagne's Reputation and Legend," in the same volume, pp. 23-39.

9 See David Price, *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance: Humanism, Reformation, and the Art of Faith* (Ann Arbor, 2003), pp. 105-09. The panels read in German, "Charlemagne reigned [as Holy Roman Emperor] for 14 years. He was the son of the Frankish King Pippin, and Roman Emperor. He made the Roman Empire subject to German rule. His crown and garments are put on public display every year in Nuremberg, together with other relics"; "Emperor Sigismund ruled for 28 years. He always supported the city of Nuremberg, bestowing upon it many special signs of his favor. In the year 1424, he brought here from Prague the relics that are shown every year." Price argues that Dürer may have composed these captions himself.

Dürer's time Charlemagne had become, throughout Europe, not only a sign for good rulership and imperial power, as the Nuremberg commissioners no doubt thought of him, but a sign for charismatic authority itself.¹⁰ Since contemporary images from the era of Charlemagne were scarce at best (and we should doubt whether Dürer would have used them had he known about them), Dürer had to construct a figurative depiction of his own from the building blocks of stories and legend. Sigismund withers not in the shadow of a historical predecessor, but instead in the mythic, blinding radiance of a fabled and transcendent father of Europe.

The evolution of Charlemagne's image as a sign for charisma reveals in stark relief a deep historical irony upon which the remainder of this essay will focus. Charlemagne himself, and early Carolingian culture in general, was in fact quite anxious about charisma, and in particular, the dangerous power of charismatic art. Charlemagne's court produced the *Opus Caroli Regis* (formerly known as the *Libri Carolini*), the most extensive statement in the history of the Western Church, before or since, concerning the role of images and pictorial art in Christian life.¹¹ One of the *Opus Caroli's* central claims is that images, no matter how skillfully executed, can never convey anything beyond the material world from which they are constructed. Any artist's attempt to depict aspects of the non-material world, such as the aura of the divine, or the charisma of emperors, is ultimately an attempt to deceive. As the *Opus Caroli* argues repeatedly, only words had this unique power. We cannot know for certain whether this was the reason that there is such a dearth of pictorial representation of Charlemagne from during his reign. Yet as Thomas F.X. Noble has noted suggestively, the absence of images is in perfect keeping with the theology of the *Opus Caroli*. It is simply a historical fact that the early Carolingians seem to have produced remarkably few pictorial images of their rulers.¹²

I would like to suggest a possible connection between this cultural distrust of charismatic pictorial art and the innovative means by which the early Carolingians *did* choose to represent their emperors: the revival of secular biography. David Ganz has recently called Einhard's decision to write biogra-

10 For "Charlemagne" as ideological discourse, see also Eugene Vance, "Semiotics and Power: Relics, Icons, and the *Voyage de Charlemagne à Jerusalem et à Constantinople*," *Romantic Review* 79 (1988), 170-71.

11 Theodulf of Orléans et al., *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum (Libri Carolini)*, MGH Conc. 2/1, eds. Ann Freeman and Paul Meyvaert (Hanover, 1998) (cited hereafter as *Opus Caroli Regis*).

12 Thomas F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, 2013), p. 229.

phy “utterly remarkable.”¹³ It most certainly was. No one in the West had composed the biography of a secular figure for centuries, and Einhard’s chief model, famously discovered by the scholar Casaubon in the 16th century, was Suetonius, a man who had written 700 years before the Carolingian rise to power.¹⁴ In contemplating the Carolingian revival of secular biography during the second quarter of the 9th century (two more were written in prose and one in verse about Louis the Pious), Ganz asks the crucial question: “What had happened to Carolingian history which meant that it was best recorded not as history, not as annals, but as biography?”¹⁵ Ganz’s answer is that the Carolingians turned to the biographic genre because they believed it to exhibit a degree of honesty and plain-spokenness that the genre of history lacked. Where history was considered grandiose, Ganz argues, biography was, for the Carolingians, “unpretentious.”¹⁶ It allowed Carolingian writers to focus on ideals of rulership which annalistic forms simply could not address.

To this I wish only to add that the Carolingian revival of biography may also have been informed by a deep cultural unease about the power of charismatic pictorial art to confuse and to lead astray the viewer, particularly in the depiction of emperors. For decades within the Carolingian intellectual world, there had been widespread distrust of the material images and effigies by which their ancient Roman predecessors and Byzantine Roman contemporaries cultivated and projected the charismatic aura of their emperors.¹⁷ Thus when, during the 820s and 830s, political turmoil led to debate and infighting within the Carolingian imperial court over conceptions of right kingship, and writers needed an art form that could convey the charismatic images of ideal rulership

13 David Ganz, “The Astronomer’s Life of Louis the Pious,” in *Rome and Religion in the Medieval World: Studies in Honor of Thomas F.X. Noble*, ed. Valerie L. Garver and Owen M. Phelan (London, 2014), p. 138.

14 It has also been suggested that Einhard drew on Tacitus’s *Agricola* and Cicero. See Thomas F.X. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thégan, and the Astronomer*, trans. Thomas F.X. Noble (University Park, 2009), pp. 15-16; Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 17-20. Cf. also the recent remarks by Gereon Becht-Jördens, “Einhardts <Vita Karoli> und die antike Tradition von Biographie und Historiographie. Von der Gattungsgeschichte zur Interpretation,” *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 46 (2011), 335-69.

15 Ganz, “The Astronomer’s Life,” p. 131.

16 Ganz, “The Astronomer’s Life,” p. 138.

17 For Carolingian depictions of their pagan Roman predecessors, see Lawrence Nees, *A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court* (Philadelphia, 1991), especially pp. 270-74.

for which they wished to argue, it may be no coincidence that they turned to what was considered a much safer and more truthful medium: words.



Jaeger's conception of charismatic art is very much dependent upon the viewer, for as he himself notes, art that has a charismatic effect on one person may not have the same effect on another.¹⁸ This makes the study of charismatic art in the past a difficult task at best because it requires evidence of reception. Luckily, we have a poem from the year 829 that offers us at least partial access to how one Carolingian, Walahfrid Strabo, characterized his own experience of a work of art's charismatic effects: the *De imagine Tetrici*.¹⁹

In that year, the Emperor Louis the Pious summoned Strabo to his court to oversee the education of his youngest son, Charles. Strabo would become arguably the finest poet of his generation and a trusted advisor and court figure for the next decade, retiring to become abbot of Reichenau in 838. Charles would grow up, of course, to become King Charles "the Bald" of the Western Franks. In 829, however, Charles was only five or six years of age, and remarkably, Walahfrid was not much older: only 20 or 21. For an oblate such as Strabo, likely of non-noble origins, a court appointment at such a young age was no small honor. He had studied with the greatest minds of his day: Grimald at Reichenau and then Hrabanus Maurus at Fulda; and he had been recommended to Louis by the Archchaplain Hilduin, a trusted advisor. Yet we must wonder whether the young phenom scholar knew what he was in for. 829 was among the most tumultuous years of Louis's tumultuous reign, perhaps second only to 833, when Louis was forced for a short period of time to abdicate his throne. In 829, there was a volatile political rift between Louis and his three elder sons, Lothar, Louis "the German," and Pippin, prompted in no small part by the favor that Louis the Pious was now showing toward the young Charles, born of a different

¹⁸ Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 35.

¹⁹ Michael W. Herren, "The 'De imagine Tetrici' of Walahfrid Strabo: Edition and Translation," *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991), 118-39 (cited hereafter as *De imagine Tetrici*). It should be noted here that I agree wholeheartedly with Lawrence Nees's important discussion of Carolingian ekphrasis and art description in the service of moral argumentation (see especially Nees, *A Tainted Mantle*, pp. 21-46). As Nees argues, poems such as *De imagine Tetrici* must have embellished the actual art described, if that art ever existed in the first place. The poem's focus on the power of art, real or otherwise, to affect the viewer is my subject here.

and not universally popular mother, Judith.²⁰ In agreeing to come to court specifically to train this youngest royal heir, Walahfrid Strabo was entering a pit of vipers.

There is reason to believe, however, that Walahfrid knew exactly what he was doing. For in that same year, perhaps as part of his tutelage of the young Charles, Walahfrid wrote a poetic reflection on an equestrian statue that stood on the palace grounds at Aachen. It was, we believe, a statue of Theoderic the Great, king of the Ostrogoths (d. 526), cast in gilded bronze, according to the poem, armed with shield and lance, and mounted on horseback atop a roughly ten-foot base. Accompanying the statue, also according to the poem, was a troop of statuary retainers that allegorically represented Rome and Ravenna. Charlemagne brought the statue to Aachen from Ravenna in the year 801 and installed it at his palace because, wrote Agnellus of Ravenna in the 830s or early 840s, the emperor had marveled at its beauty and had never seen its like.²¹

That Charlemagne had been captivated by the allure of the statue is central to the meditation of the poem, for at its heart it is about the ways in which the Theoderic statue conveys charisma of a wrong and dangerous sort. Strabo labeled his verses “on the image of Tetricus,” a pun on the consonants of Theoderic that meant in Latin “foul,” “harsh,” “gloomy,” “severe.” Michael W. Herren, the most recent editor, translator, and interpreter of the poem, suggests for *tetricus* the connotation, “cruel.”²² The poem, 262 hexameters in length, is built loosely on the structure of a Virgilian eclogue; yet in true Carolingian fashion Strabo repurposes the ancient genre for new use, replacing bucolic shepherd’s speech with allusive and biting commentary on current political affairs. He inserts himself into the poem as a character, “Strabus” (a name which he actually prefers, he explains at the end of the poem, to the more grammatically correct “Strabo”). As Strabus, he converses with his muse, “Scintilla,” whom Dümmler has argued represents Strabo’s first teacher,

20 For a concise introduction to Carolingian political history during this period see especially Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 194–222. For further analysis, see especially Booker, *Past Convictions*, and Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge, 2009).

21 Agnellus of Ravenna describes and recounts Charlemagne’s acquisition of the statue in his *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* 94, MGH SS rer. Lang., ed. Oswald Holder-Egger (Hanover, 1878), pp. 337–38.

22 Herren, “Edition and Translation,” p. 118.

Grimald of Reichenau.²³ Together they contemplate the statuary group in the courtyard and discuss the messages that it conveys.

Protracted exposition of the poem is unnecessary here, as it has received several extended readings, most notably by Peter Godman and, again, Michael Herren.²⁴ In Herren's reading, which seeks to correct Godman on a number of key points, the poem's central allusion is to the Old Testament Book of Exodus and the story of the Golden Calf. "Tetricus" is an idolatrous representation of good kingship that captivated Charlemagne and now threatens to push the government of Louis toward a dark future. Louis is called Moses in the poem, a strange Old Testament figure with which to allegorize a Carolingian Emperor. Charlemagne had most often been likened in his court poetry to David, sometimes Solomon; in *Admonitio generalis* he is juxtaposed with Josiah, the law giver.²⁵ Yet in Strabo's poem Louis is Moses, or rather, as Herren argues, *should remember to be* like Moses, for he is in great danger of falling victim to the worship of a false idol – the Golden Calf that Tetricus represents.

In general I concur with Herren's overall interpretation. The poem is in part a subtle admonition to Louis that he should forge his own path, follow the advice of his wise counselors, and not follow the examples of the greedy and worldly emperors of old. His duty is to lead the Franks as the people of God. I would only emphasize further that Strabo's warning is not simply against the idolatrous worship of bad kingship. He is specifically warning against the power of charismatic art to lead emperors astray.

Roughly the first half of the poem records the conversation between Strabus and Scintilla as they gaze upon and consider the sculpture group. Strabus,

23 For "Strabus," *De imagine Tetrici*, colophon, lines 3-4 (Herren, "Edition and Translation," p. 139). For the identification of Scintilla, see Walahfrid Strabo, "De imagine Tetrici," MGH Poetae 2, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin, 1884), pp. 302 and 370. Thomas F.X. Noble has suggested that Scintilla is meant to refer to another aspect of Strabo's own psyche: "Images, a Daydream, and Heavenly Sounds in the Carolingian Era: Walahfrid Strabo and Maura of Troyes," in *Envisioning Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Dynamic Patterns in Texts and Images*, eds. Giselle de Nie and Thomas F.X. Noble (New York, 2012 [reprinted 2016]), p. 26.

24 Peter Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 133-47; Michael W. Herren, "Walahfrid Strabo's 'De imagine Tetrici': An Interpretation," in *Latin Culture and Medieval Germanic Europe; Proceedings of the First Germania Latina Conference Held at the University of Groningen, 26 May 1989*, eds. Richard North and Tette Hofstra (Groningen, 1992), pp. 25-41.

25 For the commonplace of Charlemagne as David see, for example, Peter Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (Norman, 1985), p. 5; for Charlemagne as Josiah, see *Die Admonitio generalis Karls des Großen*, MGH Fontes iuris 16, ed. Klaus Zechiel-Eckes and Michael Glatthaar (Hannover, 2012), p. 182, lines 30-31.

assuming the role of student, asks Scintilla first to explain to him why the statue and its entourage of figures were made. Theoderic was once a ruler, Scintilla responds, who now suffers in eternal flames for his greed and miserliness. The conversation between Strabus and Scintilla thus teaches lessons on good kingship. Importantly, however, Scintilla pays special attention to the role of the craftsmen in the construction of the art and the messages that the art conveys:

If perchance the craftsmen gave this statue to him while living,
Rest assured it was to soothe a raging lion through their art,
Or else – and I think it more likely – the dreadful man himself
Commissioned the likeness, which is often the prerogative of pride.
For no man will be unhappy unless he ceases to know himself
And dares to believe that he is what he is not.
If you know that the proud are wont to be placed in chariots and on horses,
you will scarcely be astonished that he is sitting on a horse.²⁶

Theoderic likely commissioned the statuary himself, Scintilla suggests contemptuously. This is ill pride. But his criticism is also directed toward the craftsmen of the piece. The artists had not only the power to appease the emperor in his pride and tyranny, but to feed Theoderic's hubris by making him appear, and thus allowing him to believe, that he was greater than he actually was. Only the unhappy fail to know who they truly are.

During the course of their conversation, Strabus and Scintilla continue to mock the charismatic delusions of the statue. Tetricus, far from an image of glorious kingship, is an object of ridicule. "I suppose he's nude just to get a good suntan," Strabus quips at one point.²⁷ Yet in addition to these admonitions against royal greed and tyranny, Strabo, again through the words of Scintilla, emphasizes the particular power of the art itself to encourage bad behavior in everyone:

Greed flashes all golden from his embellished parts,
It carries the darts with the power to stir lazy flanks
And kindle hearts to habitual plunder.
That this golden image reigns surrounded by a dark entourage

²⁶ Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 38-45. Trans. Herren, "Edition and Translation," p. 132.

²⁷ Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, line 53. I suggest a somewhat looser translation than Herren's in order to convey what I believe is indeed the tone of the Latin: "Nudus ob hoc solum, puto, ut atra pelle fruatur."

Means nothing else than this:

To the extent that wicked luxury swells some with a sense of greed,
 Burning poverty brings destruction to others in the same degree.
 That the waters flow away is because, as the poet says,
 "The greedy man is always in need." But the absence of bridles
 And that he rides his horse over stones, lead, and hollow metal
 Show that he rules his proud beast with a greedy spirit,
 An insensitive heart and hollow feeling.
 O bane injurious without cease, was it not enough
 To fly through the whole world with war and the slaughter of the mighty,
 Without also taking care to set your cursed face
 Against illustrious palaces and Christian congregations?²⁸

Theoderic used art to wicked ends, Scintilla teaches. He not only made war against Rome and championed Arianism against the catholic faith; he circulated his self-aggrandized image for public display in a manner that emboldened others to enact the very sins that he himself committed.

And this, the poem suggests, was effectively the trap into which Charlemagne, Louis's father, had fallen. In being enchanted by the statue's beauty and bringing it to Aachen for display, Charlemagne had been worshipping a false idol of kingship. On this point of interpretation, I break in part from Herren, for he hangs his reading on his translation of a peculiar quintet of ultimately puzzling lines – the only lines of the poem to refer to Charlemagne directly. Herren believes that the poem is equating Tetricus with Charlemagne, not a completely outlandish thought to attribute to the versifier of the highly critical *Visio Wettini*.²⁹ I believe, however, that the critique in *De imagine Tetrici* is slightly less damning than Herren thinks, and oriented toward a slightly different flaw.

In the passage in question, Strabo addresses Louis the Pious directly, reminding him that like Moses his duty is, effectively, to build a tabernacle to God and to lead his people to the promised land. In Latin the lines addressing Charlemagne read as follows:

Tu vero in populis paradysi ad amoena vocatis
 Templam regis fundata sacris, rex magne, lapillis,
 Quorum pensa pater quondam tibi magnus adauxit;

²⁸ Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 60-75. Trans. Herren, "Edition and Translation," pp. 133-34.

²⁹ Walafrid Strabo, "Visio Wettini Walafridi," MGH Poetae 2, pp. 318-19, lines 446-61.

Aurea cui ludunt summis simulacra columnis,
Cuius ad ingenium non confero dogma Platonis.³⁰

The “tu” refers to Louis, and thus his “magnus pater” is Charlemagne. Herren translates this section to be saying that Charlemagne adorned his churches with golden effigies of himself:

You rule among a people called to the beauties of paradise
Over temples built upon sacred stones, great king.
Your famous father at one time enhanced their importance.
His golden effigies sport at the tops of columns,
To his genius I do not apply the teaching of Plato.³¹

In this Herren sees a relation to Tetricus, and thus claims that the poem criticizes Charlemagne for erecting self-aggrandizing images and failing to exhibit the “teaching of Plato,” a cryptic reference to lines at the end of the poem, where Strabo quotes Boethius’s Platonic maxim, “Only then does a prosperous republic rise,/ When kings are sufficiently wise and wise men are kings.”³²

The difficulty with Herren’s interpretation is that it requires the dative *cui* to serve as a genitive, which is unlikely given Strabo’s learned facility with classical style. In my reading of the Latin, Herren’s English translation works only if the reader understands line 110 to be referring to the statues of Theoderic and his retinue, the subject under scrutiny in the poem. The “his” in the line is thus referring to the fact that Charlemagne brought them to the palace in the first place. They are “his” statues in the sense that they play *for* or *to* him (a more accurate sense of the dative) and give him enjoyment; but they are not effigies *of* him. Therefore, the critique of Charlemagne, while still a critique, is not what Herren suggests. It is that Charlemagne had been enchanted by the art. So enchanted, he had not acted as the kind of wise man and king that the republic required according to Boethius and Plato. Louis, by extension, should beware the false idol of kingship that Theoderic represents and the trap into which his father had fallen.

30 Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 107-11.

31 Herren, “Edition and Translation,” pp. 134-35, with exposition of his reading in Herren, “Walafrid Strabo’s ‘De imagine Tetrici’; An Interpretation,” pp. 34-35.

32 Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 256-257. Trans. Herren, “Edition and Translation,” p. 139. The reference to Boethius is crucial, Herren argues correctly, because it was Theoderic who condemned the beloved philosopher to death; Herren, “Edition and Translation,” p. 120.

I elaborate on this grammatical quibble only because it is of crucial importance for understanding the historical significance of the poem and what it says about charismatic art within Carolingian political culture. The notion of Charlemagne constructing effigies of himself, as Herren would suggest, in fact goes utterly against what we know about the image policy of Charlemagne's court. In his magisterial history of Byzantine and Western Christian doctrine concerning icons during the first millennium, Thomas F.X. Noble shows how deeply invested Charlemagne was in the doctrine that images, while not inherently evil, had the power to deceive when used in devotional practices. Furthermore, Charlemagne's courtiers saw this as a crucial doctrinal difference of opinion between themselves and their Byzantine counterparts, to such a great degree that in the *Opus Caroli Regis* it serves as a means of asserting key distinctions between Western and Eastern identity. The Carolingians, in other words, built their claims to being the true inheritors of Rome, the righteous leaders of the Faith, and the chosen people of God, precisely upon the argument they used images correctly, whereas the Byzantines did not.³³ That Charlemagne enjoyed a work of art fits his court's policy. That he commissioned golden effigies of himself and adorned churches with them does not.

This is important because it speaks to an increasing iconophobia among the Carolingians in the final decades of Charlemagne's reign, and in the decades that followed his death. The *Opus Caroli's* most stridently repeated argument is that images cannot possibly convey anything beyond the physical world. To believe that they could was to believe in a kind of dangerous idolatry. The polemic of the *Opus Caroli's* primary author, Theodulf of Orleans, is particularly vitriolic and sarcastic on this matter. Reciting an argument that had been made since the early centuries of the church, he wrote that images could never accurately depict extra-human qualities. There are many different images of St. Paul, he says. Which of them is the most true? How can humans determine that truth? And if one image is less true than another, how can we know that we are contemplating the true figure and not a false one?³⁴ Theodulf then attacks the hypothetical notion that an image can express hyper-mimetic holiness:

But let us say that there is holiness in a painted image. Where was this holiness before it was created? Could it be in the wood, which is obtained from the forest for use, whose surplus is surrendered to the fires? Could it be in the pigments, which are commonly made from unclean things?

33 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 208-15.

34 *Opus Caroli regis* 1.2, p. 118.

Could it be in the wax, which contains both pigments and filth? If it is in the wood, why, when holiness knows no death, would it be in something that can be carried off to its execution, the hatchet blunting it, the carpenter's axe gnawing at it, the plane shaving it, consumed by the funeral pyre and reduced into glowing ashes. Pigments die, too, broken down into separate shades in the hands of an artist. And wax is rendered void drop by drop, melted by the extreme heat of fire. Or if holiness is not to be sought (and in fact it is not) in the things about which we have gone on at such length, from where does the holiness get added after the image is constructed out of these many materials? As long as holiness is not discovered to be added to an image either through a blessing or through some canonical consecration, it is not to be believed that it is within. If holiness is within, can it be inquired whether it would crack when the image cracks from old age? Would the holiness cross over into something else constructed from the image's parts? Indeed, if holiness is within the image, it comes from a different source, and if it comes from a different source, it can cross over to another. But holiness does not cross over to another thing, therefore it is not to be believed that it is within.³⁵

Theodulf's argument is about the power of art to channel the divine. Yet part of the reason that this issue was so important to him was that he believed the Byzantines also attributed such power to images of their emperors.³⁶ Theodulf was particularly wary of imperial images that tricked not only the viewer but the subject – that is, the emperor himself (or empress herself, in the particular case of the *Opus Caroli*) – into believing in the emperor's likeness to the divine. God can never be one's peer, Theodulf wrote derisively, and the emperor does not co-reign with God, as he believed the Byzantine rulers had boasted at their synod: "He reigns *in* us. He does not reign together *with* us."³⁷ Images of the emperor, because they are images and made from the stuff of the material world, could convey no aura of special power. Not only was it blasphemous to believe that a human being could represent her or himself with a special power that was more than real and true; to do so was to send the wrong message to the people about their proper role models. Theodulf makes this argument directly in two different chapters of Book III. Citing Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Theodulf writes, "The teacher of the gentiles urged us not to

35 *Opus Caroli regis* 1.2, pp. 118-19. My translation.

36 For the different traditions of imperial image devotion in Byzantium and Francia, see especially Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority*, pp. 203-06.

37 *Opus Caroli regis* 1.1, p. 114. My translation and emphasis.

be imitators of emperors, but [God's] own imitators."³⁸ In the margins of the *Opus Caroli* manuscript considered to be the original working copy are notes in a contemporary script, believed to record the responses of Charlemagne himself when the text was read to him. For this statement, Charlemagne exclaims, "Prudent!"³⁹

These arguments, stated and restated throughout the *Opus Caroli*, were built upon the Augustinian doctrine that the only means by which human beings could accurately convey ideas about the divine was through words. Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*, Book 2, had been particularly clear about the inferiority of images to words.⁴⁰ Words were the closest access that human beings could have to the divine, and Christians were to revere the power and depth and mystery of the *verbum* as the most efficient and accurate means of contemplating God and his creation. Paintings were dangerous, said the *Opus Caroli*, following this line of thought, because they were so much more potentially false than the written word. In Noble's words, concerning what the *Opus Caroli* argues about the difference between images and Scripture: "... conveying what the Lord has said is the work of writers, not painters: 'painters can in some way bring the stories of past events back to memory but things that are only perceived by the senses and brought forth by words are comprehended not by painters but by writers.'"⁴¹

Strabo's concern in *De imagine Tetrici* thus becomes all the more clear. Charlemagne had been enchanted by a false idol, and Louis needed to be careful not to commit the same mistake. Just a few years before 829, Claudius of Turin had made waves preaching the destruction of all images being brought back by pilgrims from the Holy Land because of their danger. Claudius was condemned for advocating too draconian and quasi-heretical a position.⁴² Yet it shows how Carolingian culture during the 820s leaned far more toward iconophobia than iconophilia. And it demonstrates the theological environment within which Strabo would have been trained, and which he thought best to teach at court.

38 *Opus Caroli regis* 3.15, p. 400. My translation. Cf. *Opus Caroli regis* 3.29, pp. 475-79.

39 For commentary on the marginal notes, see Ann Freeman (with Paul Meyvaert), "*Opus Caroli regis contra synodum: An Introduction*," in *Theodulf of Orleans: Charlemagne's Spokesman against the Second Council of Nicaea*, ed. Paul Meyvaert (Burlington, VT, 2003), pp. 70-74.

40 See Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, p. 36, 104.

41 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, p. 200, citing and translating *Opus Caroli Regis* 3.23, pp. 446-47.

42 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, pp. 287-328.

Finally, it begs the question of whether it was no coincidence at all that Einhard penned his *Vita Caroli* according to the same theological principles, and in precisely the same political moment within which Strabo wrote his verses. Einhard could have commissioned sculptors or painters to represent the ideal image of Charlemagne that he wished to portray. Instead he chose words. Not only could he persuade more clearly and more directly in words. Words could also exalt without deceiving. Life writing in the form of hagiography had for centuries been used for its hyper-mimetic capacity to convey aspects of saintliness. The secular biography served the same function for non-saintly figures, representing their own special qualities in the interest of creating a community of correct and loyal devotion.

Einhard's *Vita Caroli* has been well-studied as a work of biographic art. I would only draw attention to the manner in which Einhard's *Vita Caroli* projects a particular kind of imperial image, quite different from the statue that Strabo mocks. It projects, in other words, an imperial aggrandizement that within the culture of the 820s and 830s was considered to be aggrandizement of the *right* kind. Einhard wrote in his preface that he feared the loss of Charlemagne's memory, and that this was one of the reasons for writing down for posterity the story of his friend. Yet he makes clear to his reader also that the purpose of his writing was to focus attention on what Charlemagne actually did – his deeds – not simply his greatness: "Thus [I present] to you this book containing an account of the most splendid and greatest of all men. There is nothing in it that you should admire but his accomplishments ..." ⁴³ Einhard makes here a self-deprecating reference to the quality of his style, but in this he also signals the fact that the biographic genre allows for his plain style, just as Ganz has argued, and plain style is best for focusing the reader on deeds in the right way. ⁴⁴

In the text, Charlemagne is a warlord, to be sure. Yet he is no Tetricus. The discussion of his military exploits focuses not on the glory of his victories and the prowess of his battle skills. It orients the reader more toward a sanitized narrative of Frankish expansion and the spreading of Frankish Christianity throughout the known world. In the second half of the *Vita*, Einhard famously focuses on Charlemagne's private world, his personality and his manner. We can guess with relative certainty that Einhard crafted the well-known physical description of the emperor with an eye toward achieving an enchanting effect

43 Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* prologus, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger (Hanover, 1911), pp. 1-2. Trans. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, p. 16.

44 See above, note 13, 15, and 16.

on his reader. Yet Einhard does not make the emperor larger than life so much as he renders him likeable for his extreme accessibility:

[Charles] had a large and powerful body. He was tall [at slightly over six feet or 1.83 meters], but not disproportionately so, since it is known that his height was seven times the length of his own foot. The crown of his head was round, his eyes were noticeably large and full of life, his nose was a little longer than average, his hair was grey and handsome, and his face was attractive and cheerful. Hence, his physical presence was [always] commanding and dignified, whether he was sitting or standing. Although his neck seemed short and thick and his stomach seemed to stick out, the symmetry of the other parts [of his body] hid these [flaws]. [When he walked] his pace was strong and the entire bearing of his body powerful. Indeed, his voice was distinct, but not as [strong as might have been] expected given his size.⁴⁵

Once again, this is no Tetricus. Charlemagne is powerful, but he is hardly gilded. He is attractive, but not exactly beautiful. As in the modern American myths of Abraham Lincoln, Charlemagne speaks with a voice that seems weak for a man of his size, yet he commands authority and loyalty through strength of character and wise management of personalities. He weeps for his sons when they die and he loves his daughters, ignoring the rumors of impropriety that this causes.⁴⁶ Unlike the biographies that would be written in the next decade about Louis the Pious, Einhard's text does not dwell on the inner demons with which Charlemagne may or may not have wrestled.⁴⁷ Interiority is present in Einhard's description, but the hyper-mimesis of the biography suggests rather a distinct lack of personal conflict, a preternatural capacity for avoiding strife and quelling adversity with calm and ease.⁴⁸

45 Einhard, *Vita Karoli* II.22, pp. 26-27. Trans. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, p. 30.

46 Einhard, *Vita Karoli* II.19, pp. 23-25.

47 See especially Andrew J. Romig, "In Praise of the Too-Clement Emperor: The Problem of Forgiveness in the Astronomer's *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*," *Speculum* 89, no. 2 (2014), 394-95.

48 An assessment that counters traditional interpretations of the last years of his reign. See François-Louis Ganshof, "Charlemagne's Failure (L'échec de Charlemagne)," in *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (London, 1971 [1947]), pp. 256-60; François-Louis Ganshof, "The Last Period of Charlemagne's Reign: A Study in Decomposition (La fin du règne de Charlemagne, une décomposition)," in the same volume, pp. 240-45; and the important reconsideration by Janet L. Nelson, "The Voice of Charlemagne," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*:

It should come as no surprise that when Strabo edited and wrote a new preface to Einhard's *Vita Caroli* soon after the death of Louis the Pious, for Strabo it was Einhard's quality that lent authority to Charlemagne, and not the other way around. The attributes of character for which Einhard praised Charlemagne – his humanity, his sense of duty, his shrewd political savvy – were precisely the traits that Strabo praised in Einhard.⁴⁹ And significantly, Strabo lauded Einhard most of all for his capacity to understand what artists should and should not do. The prologue to the *Vita Caroli* was not the first time that Strabo had written admiringly about Einhard. Einhard appears in *De imagine Tetrici* as well:

No less should be our reverence for this great father,
 Beseleel, who skillfully and carefully grasps
 Every task of craftsmen: thus in the end
 God on high, who chooses the weak, spurns the strong;
 For who of the great ever received greater gifts
 Than those which, to much marveling, radiate from this tiny man?⁵⁰

Throughout his career, Einhard had often been likened to Beseleel in court poetry, a reference to the chief artisan of Moses's tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.⁵¹ Yet in Strabo's poem the allusion obviously takes on special import. As the *Opus Caroli* argues about Beseleel, Beseleel had been chosen by the Lord to make a work of gold and silver, but filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and knowledge to do so correctly.⁵² In Strabo's description, Einhard is above all the consummate craftsman – the artist who knows how to construct a proper image of an emperor.

• • •

Carolingian concerns about the charismatic power of imperial images may have been successful, ultimately, in making Charlemagne an avatar of right Christian rulership. Yet his first charismatic depictees could not control the

Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting, eds. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford, 2001), pp. 77-80.

49 Cf. Walafrid Strabo, *Vita Karoli* prologus, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, p. XXIX.

50 Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 191-96. Trans. Herren, "Edition and Translation," p. 137.

51 Exod. 31:1-6, and chapters 36-39.

52 *Opus Caroli regis* 1.16, p. 176.

embellishments that he would receive nevertheless in the explosion of the artistic representations created after his death. One can only imagine Strabo shaking his head, for example, at the remarkable resemblance between his description of Tetricus and the equestrian statue of Charlemagne that stands today just outside the entrance to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris (fig. 4.2). Cast in bronze by the brothers Louis and Charles Rochet in 1878, this is the Charlemagne of Dürer, not Einhard. Charlemagne stands resolute, armed, forked-bearded, and mounted, accompanied by two rugged looking companions (thought perhaps to represent Roland and Oliver). They menace the viewer in the “Germanic” style that was popular in 19th-century representations of the romantic and heroic early medieval past. The throngs of tourists awaiting their entry to Notre Dame cannot miss his presence, and while his size is dwarfed by the massive structure of the cathedral behind him, his proportions some 20 feet high convey charismatically an elevated and white-washed story of a glorious and untainted medieval past, of the Christian Church as bringer of light and civilization, with Charlemagne leading the way.

The tourists, and many professional historians alike, do not recognize enough that the vast majority of what we know concerning Charlemagne’s charismatic persona comes solely from his posthumous literary representation and legendary remembrance.⁵³ Perhaps he did have more charisma than his son. In a sense, however, all we can truly say is that Charlemagne enjoys a legacy of having had charisma. This is a distinction for which Stephen Jaeger’s category of “charismatic art” is far more useful than Weberian concepts of charismatic leadership and personality for our understanding of Charlemagne and his remembrance. Beyond simply extending the study of Charlemagne’s charisma from his person to the objects that represented him after his death, the concept of charismatic art allows us to see Charlemagne’s legendary legacy for what it truly is: a locus of artistic freeplay not upon his historical charisma, but upon his historical *reputation* for charisma.

Of the artists who wrote about and depicted Charlemagne after his death, only Einhard drew upon personal memory of Charlemagne the man. All the rest were working from the constructed reputation of Charlemagne as

53 Janet Nelson has argued perceptively and provocatively that we can perhaps glean something of Charlemagne’s personality and personal sense of urgency with regard to reform from the flurry of capitularies drafted in the final decade of his reign (Nelson, “The Voice of Charlemagne,” pp. 76-88). I certainly agree that there is something of the voice of Charlemagne in these documents, but it does not preclude the fact that the voice we “hear” is still inflected heavily by the expectations placed upon us by Charlemagne’s charismatic remembrance after the 9th century.



FIGURE 4.2 *Bronze equestrian statue of Charlemagne outside the entrance to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Brothers Louis and Charles Rochet in 1878 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).*

charismatic man – removed from the original, whom we can never truly know. The history of Charlemagne’s legacy is therefore not simply the history of how charismatic reputation is constructed, but how charismatic reputation is used and re-used as a sign unto itself. It surely does not stretch the implications of Professor Jaeger’s book too far to claim what is commonplace to scholars of literature and performance theorists, but still quite radical for too many historians: namely that all human personas – particularly charismatic personas – are in some form, works of constructed art. And perhaps it is not even hyperbolic to say that the historical study of charisma is always, necessarily, the study of charismatic art, simply by virtue of the obvious fact that the artistic representation of charismatic figures is all we ever have with which to work. We can never study figures themselves in unmediated form, and perhaps there is no such thing as the unmediated form.

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Abbreviations

- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae historica*
 Conc. *Concilia*, eds. Friedrich Maassen et al. 8 vols. Hanover, 1893-.
 Fontes iuris *Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi*, eds. Mario Krammer et al. 16 vols. Hanover, 1909-.
 Poetae *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, ed. Ernst Dümmler. 4 vols. Berlin, 1881-1923.
 ss rer. Germ. *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, eds. Georg Pertz et al. 80 vols. Hanover, 1871-.
 ss rer. Lang. *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*, eds. Georg Waitz et al. Hanover, 1878.

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The Saint's Life as a Charismatic Form: Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi

C. Stephen Jaeger

For Michael Curschmann



Life-Writing

The academic study of charisma has long been where Max Weber put it: in the areas of religious experience, political leadership, and social interaction. Looming behind these domains, where living people embody charisma and influence admirers in a variety of ways, is a very broad realm in which neither Weber nor the sociologists, historians, psychologists who followed him had any interest: art and literature. These exercise charismatic effects no less than human beings; in fact one of the reasons why art and literature exist is to give fascinating people an earthly afterlife.¹

One topic of many in this area of interest in medieval studies is charismatic effects in the saint's life. The literary/hagiographic form responds to and interacts in a wide variety of ways with the actual effect of the personal presence of the living saint. To see that interaction at its most critical, we must imagine the crisis within a religious movement upon the death of a charismatic leader. If the guidance of an ordered monastic life had been regulated by the charismatic force of a leader's personal presence, then the bereaved community faces a serious problem, a leadership vacuum. It had two options: it either "went straight" by taking over a conventional rule of life and so abandoning its charismatic phase (Gert Melville calls it "Entcharismatisierung"),² or con-

* This study is a lightly revised version of the keynote address at the NYU conference which led to the publication of this volume. I omit discussion and bibliography on the Weberian tradition of scholarship on charisma, and refer the interested reader to my book, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012).

1 See also "Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory," *New German Critique* 114 (2011), 17-34.

2 See Gert Melville, "Stefan von Obazine: Begründung und Überwindung charismatischer Führung," in *Charisma und Religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter*, eds. Giancarlo Andenna, Mirko Breitenstein, and Gert Melville, *Vita Regularis: Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen*

tinued to live through the charisma of its founder. Or some combination of the two. The impulse to maintain the charisma of the founder had to be strong. Devotional forms, liturgy (Christ's presence in the eucharist), relics, could help, but the textualizing of charisma was stronger, more attractive, more portable; writing gave it a form of permanence without the evanescent quality of a performance.

But the impulse to charismatic representation is not always present in the saint's life. The kind of hagiography I have called "life-writing" tries to inject into the text a vitality that transmits itself to the reader in something like the force of the personal presence of the living saint. While there will be degrees of charismatic presence in any *vita*, still the distinction between charismatic and non-charismatic is useful, and it is that distinction on which this essay turns. The term "life-writing" is meant to convey this intention of the charismatic saint's life. The "life" that is conveyed in sacred biography, insofar as it aims at capturing charisma, is heightened life, narrated with intensity, either in the voice of the narrator or in the structure of narrative (dynamics) or in the charm or the passion of personalities and interactions. When those elements blend with heightened stylistic elements (e.g. rhetorical ornament, the sublime), the combination is especially powerful. Charisma in a text inspires not just admiration but imitation. It lets the reader submerge in the character of the subject, live in that model, makes the master come to life again in the disciple, fits the vaguely defined contours of the reader's character to the sharply formed lines of the subject's life. If the reader senses the living presence of the saint in the text, we are one step on the way to life-writing; if the reader is moved, captivated, charmed, converted, transformed by the writing; if the reader feels herself enlivened and inspired by the text, then life-writing is working.

The gospels are life-writing. It would have been possible for the evangelists to write systematic treatises on the teachings of Jesus; it would have been conceivable for Jesus himself to write systematic treatises. But ideas by themselves are desiccated. Like laws they are free of subjective elements; they pale before the story of their embodiment in their first proponent, especially if he is tortured and executed for adherence to the idea he embodies. The evangelists had to resurrect the beloved teacher, keep him partly alive in words by reproducing his speech, by narrating acts that astonished men and made the idea of a living human god plausible, and by the sublime tragic drama of the crucifixion. His life had to become a pattern and a rule of life for others.³

Lebens im Mittelalter 26 (Münster, 2005), pp. 85-101; and in the same volume, Ann Müller, "Entcharismatisierung als Geltungsgrund? Gilbert von Sempringham und der frühe Gilbertinerorden," pp. 151-72.

3 As Christ was for Francis of Assisi. He understood Christ of the gospels as a living model that governed his own life, and he understood it as a rule of life for his followers, one he clung to

The distinction between life-writing and non-charismatic biography is dramatically evident in the Lives of the two saints of my title, Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi. They represent two highly original types of Christian sainthood, and two very different, indeed opposite types of charismatic leadership. And a charismatological reading of their Lives opens to view interesting aspects of the afterlife of saints in writing. It is proverbial that each book (like each person) lives out its own destiny. Writing is central in determining the posthumous destinies of the men they describe.

Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) was the subject of one significant biography. The so-called *Vita prima Bernardi* (abbreviated here as VP) is something of a jumble. Three different authors composed its five books. Each author wrote from a different perspective: William of St. Thierry (d. 1148) wrote as a devoted admirer and would-be friend of Bernard. But he died five years before Bernard. Arnald of Bonneval (Bk. 2) focused on the political issues in which Bernard engaged. Geoffrey of Clairvaux (d. 1188?) continued the biography to Bernard's death and included a dossier of miracles (Bks. 3, 4, & 5). His sections are discursive and eulogistic rather than narrative; they show Bernard the miracle-worker, loving abbot, public man, and saint. They talk about Bernard the charismatic without bringing him back to life. The VP was complete by 1155, a revised version by 1169.

Two other attempts at writing a consistent biography followed. They aimed at harmonizing the three parts of the VP, but turned out to be insignificant compilations.⁴ The efforts to produce a full record of Bernard's life in the Middle Ages ceased by the end of the 12th century.⁵ The important *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense* (c.1220) collected memorable tales of miracles around the foundation and the first decades of the Cistercian order. Bernard was one

against the institutional pressure to adopt one of the standard monastic rules. The same logic is at work when the biographers say that the person of Francis himself is a rule. Bernard could not be a rule in his own person. He was too intimidating and set too high above his monks.

4 Among the many peculiarities of the destiny of this book we can mention: written in three parts by three different authors. Later writers were not satisfied with the first life, tried to rewrite and improve but did not succeed. Two of the writers of the VP were never monks of Clairvaux. Geoffrey of Clairvaux was, but his early efforts aimed at finding someone other than himself to write the *Life* – collecting notes for that purpose. William and Arnald had close ties to Clairvaux but did not live at Clairvaux under Bernard's direct authority. References are to *Vita prima Sancti Bernardi Claraevallis Abbatis*, ed. Paul Verdeyen, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 89B (Turnhout, 2011).

5 The VP was much-copied in the 13th century and beyond. There are also many early printed copies, but with very few exceptions, it was added to collections of Bernard's writings. Adriaan Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Between Cult and History* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), p. 163.

subject among many. No personality emerges from this collection, just a miracle-worker.

The memory of Bernard had little impact on popular culture, though there are some significant works of art commemorating him.⁶ He is little noted by 12th-century historians.⁷

The early biographies of Francis are an ocean compared to the shallow lake and troubled waters of the Bernard biographies. In the century following his death, at least 20 major “legends” were written about him.⁸ Where the biographers of Bernard did not succeed, the memorializers of Francis did. The writings are generally lively, very readable, certainly among the most memorable biographical writings of the Middle Ages, and they culminate in a significant work with the overt claim of biography but the feel of imaginative literature, the *Fioretti*. Though a compilation, the *Fioretti* is the work of a fine poet with a good sense of narrative. It is generally considered one of the earliest masterpieces of literature in the Italian language.⁹ An enthusiastic passage from the Catholic Encyclopedia seems to me to have captured some qualities relevant to the topic of charisma in the saint’s life: “That perhaps which gives these legends such a peculiar charm, is what may be called their atmosphere; they breathe all the delicious fragrance of the early Franciscan spirit ... The pages of the *Fioretti* ... more than any other work transport us to the scenes amid which St. Francis and his first followers live, and enable us to see them as they saw themselves ... These legends, moreover, bear precious witness to the vitality and enthusiasm with which the memory of the life and teaching of the Poverello was preserved.”¹⁰

My “ocean – lake” comparison fits also in terms of quantity and publication history. There is a new collection of the complete early biographical materials

6 James France, *Medieval Images of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, Cistercian Studies 210 (Kalamazoo, 2007). Thanks to Brian McGuire for this reference.

7 Paschal Phillips, “The Presence—and Absence—of Bernard of Clairvaux in the Twelfth-Century Chronicles,” in *Bernardus Magister*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Cistercian Publications, 1992), pp. 35-53.

8 Jacques Dalarun, *The Misadventure of Francis of Assisi: Towards a Historical Use of the Franciscan Legends*, trans. Edward Hagman (Saint Bonaventure, NY, 2002; orig. 1996), p. 22. “Legenda” in the accepted parlance of Franciscan studies means “things to be read,” biographical works.

9 The Tuscan version of the *Fioretti* from mid-14th century is probably a translation/adaptation of a Latin work. The earliest manuscript is dated 1390.

10 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/o6o78b.htm>>.

on Francis to the end of the Middle Ages.¹¹ It fills four volumes (three plus an index), currently about 2500 pages in total, and the forthcoming volume 5 will push the page count well over 3000.¹² The major Latin biographies and legends fill 800 quarto pages of the *Analecta Franciscana*. Francis is perhaps the most beloved saint of Christianity. Novels, plays, and movies maintain his image in popular culture. So do statues with birds settled on the saint's hands and shoulders, available in many garden shops. Two books in English on Francis appeared in 2012, one by André Vauchez (a study), the other by Augustine Thompson (a biography with critical study of the sources and previous scholarship).¹³ They were reviewed together in the *New Yorker Magazine*, a distinction that very few in the field of medieval studies have enjoyed. Thompson has been approached by a Hollywood studio for production rights, and the name, character, and policies of the new pope will be encouragement to Hollywood to actually make the film.

Bernard: Grandiosity

Our comparison of the two saints' Lives begins with a look at the *Vita prima* of Bernard. He emerges from all five books as a powerful, daunting, but personally not very appealing figure isolated in a state somewhere between man and angel and willing to let his contemporaries feel the distance between himself and them. William of St. Thierry (author of Bk. 1 of the VP) gives a consistent picture of the impression Bernard made on his monks in his early days as abbot at Clairvaux. Simply put, first he frightened them; then he accommodated them. He welcomed novices with the announcement that they must leave their flesh behind; only spirit is countenanced in Clairvaux. They are terrified. When Bernard sees their fear, he spares the tender sensibilities of these simple men by striking a gentler tone. He didn't actually mean that they had to leave their bodies behind; only their carnal desires (VP 1. 20. Lines 563-570, ed. Verdeyen, p. 48).

William illustrates Bernard's intimidating presence in many episodes; it is clearly dominant in his image of the saint: though formidable, he learned the

11 *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, eds. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York, 1999): vol. 1: The Saint; vol. 2: The Founder; vol. 3: The Prophet. Vol. 5 will be largely devoted to Bartholomew of Pisa's *Book of Conformities*.

12 Vol. 5 will be largely devoted to Bartholomew of Pisa's *Book of Conformities*.

13 André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, trans. Michael F. Cusato (New Haven, 2012); Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca, NY, 2012).

art of taking his edge off. One passage will have to stand for several.¹⁴ In his early days as a teacher, William writes, Bernard descended on his monks like Moses emerging, horned and terrifying, from his colloquy with God on Mt. Sinai, frightening the sons of Israel. Bernard left contemplative ecstasy and came to his monks bearing a divine gift, “a miracle of a purity more than human.” He spoke to men with the tongues of angels – but angels speak a language different from novices at Clairvaux. They did not understand what Bernard said. Moreover he demanded of them in harsh sermons a perfection like his own – those are William’s words. Bernard the abbot and pastor was no softer. He hears the private confessions of his monks and reacts with shock. Their sinful thoughts appall him (ed. Verdeyen, 1. 28-29. Pp. 54-56). William comes to their defense: they are religious men. But Bernard was far above them and not patient with human frailty. Bernard has, in William’s version, a much clearer view of how things and creatures operate in heaven than on earth: he thought he was speaking with angels, but they were only men. He drove away nearly all of those whom he had come to rule over and to reside with (“pene omnes a se absterruit” – 243B). The monks were aghast at his harsh intolerance. It was a seedbed of despair (“seminarium quoddam desperationis” – 1. 29. l. 807, p. 55). Seeing their despair, Bernard softened. Clearly in the beginning of his abbacy Bernard overdid it in wielding the divinity people saw in him. But seeing the harm he causes, he changes, when, as William puts it, the Holy Spirit takes over and speaks through him in moderation and understanding for the needy and poor; he learns to act as a man among other men.¹⁵

14 Also, he treated William in the wake of a sickness, bossing him around, forbidding virtually everything William asked. William disobeys, eats what Bernard forbids, and his sickness returns. Bernard scolds and mocks him: “What do you plan to eat today?” William, now chastened: “Whatever you command” (1. 60, 1531-33, p. 75). Bernard once was about to send a monk of Foigny back to his monastery, but read certain secrets in his soul. On parting, he “ordered” him to correct those things which called for correction, or else he would soon suffer a just judgment of God. Struck dumb with amazement, the monk asked, who told him this. Bernard in effect: never mind, just do what I tell you if you want to avoid punishment (1. 63, 1615ff., p. 78). Bernard could call on this daunting presence when necessary, and it certainly helped doing church business. He confronted a count who had supported the anti-pope Anaclete, and demanded that he reinstate bishops wrongly unseated. Arnold of Bonneval: “With fire in his face and flames in his eyes, he approached the count, not to plead, but to threaten him with terrible words ... The count, seeing the abbot approaching in outrage, holding the most sacred body of the Lord in his hands, stiffened in terror, all his members trembled uncontrollably in fear, he fell over forward, as if he had lost his mind/consciousness” (1. 2., 1019ff., p. 116).

15 Bernard learns some measure of humanity from his early days at Clairvaux: VP 1. 38, 1067ff., p. 62. “Didicit aliquatenus et consuevit homo cum hominibus esse ...”

Bernard shifts from the terrifying God of Sinai to the more merciful and loving Holy Spirit. He still operates in the realms of the divine, just not the one he descended from originally, but still a world above the monks in his charge.

The holiness of Bernard is grandiose, above the human.¹⁶ William of St. Thierry and the other biographers assert his humility and gentleness, but ordinarily also explain that it is modified grandiosity. For the sake of balance, I should cite one scene that bespeaks real tenderness and devotion on the part of the disciple: One day William comes to visit Bernard at Clairvaux. He finds him in a wretched little hut like the ones set for lepers at cross-roads. Seeing him in that "royal cubicle," lost in the delights of heaven, he was filled with such a sense of reverence for Bernard and such a tender affection that he would gladly have renounced his life and stayed with him forever in the poverty and simplicity of that hut (1. 33, pp. 58-59). I think it is fair to say that in William's presentation, Bernard comes off better when alone than among other men. Geoffrey of Clairvaux devotes a chapter of Bk. 3 to his "sweet manners and preeminent virtues." But what dominates in every case, practically in every sentence, is the tension between grandeur or severity, and loving sweetness: sweetness of manners tamed austerity, saintliness preserved authority. It is a consistent picture: Bernard's saintliness gave him a hard edge that needed softening either by the Holy Spirit or by Bernard's own restraint.¹⁷

Francis: Humility

Francis was the opposite. In the *Fioretti*, once, Brother Masseo puts this question to Francis, "Why does the whole world come after you, and everyone seems to desire to see you and hear you? You aren't a handsome man in body, you aren't someone of great learning, you're not noble; so why does the whole world come after you?" Francis is delighted with the question and answers that God wanted it that way: "Since [God] could find no creature on earth more vile than me, he chose me ..."¹⁸

16 Closer to the angelic Bernard perceived as an angel: VP 1. 31. 911, p. 58: "ceteri [episcopi] didicerunt suscipere eum et revereri tamquam angelum Dei ..."; Peter Abelard sends Bernard a flattering compliment just prior to refuting his reading of the Lord's Prayer with crushing argumentation, in his Epist. 10: receiving him on a recent visit, the nuns thought he was an angel, not a man. Peter Abelard, *Letters IX-XIV: An Edition with an introduction*, ed. E.R. Smits (Groningen, 1983), p. 239.

17 See Brian McGuire, *The Difficult Saint: Bernard of Clairvaux and His Tradition* (Kalamazoo Michigan, 1991).

18 *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* ch. 10, *Early Documents*, vol. 3, p. 583.

Bernard's image is greatness restrained; Francis's is greatness rebuked. Francis conquers by humility, not by authority or high-handedness. Bernard was inimitable; his biographers conceive of him as an angel accommodated to men; Francis's make him the poorest and vilest of creatures charged by Christ with the power to transform men.

It is not just the character of the men themselves, but the character of their biographies that accounts for the differences in their popular reception. The afterlife of the man is set in large part by the quality of the narratives that represent them. The biographies of Bernard and Francis are charged with different levels of charisma. Bernard's *VP* has, in style, narrative flow, and rhetorical pitch, next to none. The lack shows in its reception. It is a historical source document, not one with any level of magnetism. Once read with notes taken, it offers little allure for a second reading.

The biographies of Francis maintain almost without exception a charm rooted in the personality of Francis. Neither the cloying piety of Thomas of Celano nor the institutional perspective of Bonaventure can reduce it to a collection of formulaic praises. The narrative dynamics are dramatic and gripping: the moment of metanoia when the young merchant's son and aspiring knight gives up his worldly ambitions and possessions, renounces his father with the sensational gesture of stripping naked before an assembly of Assisi citizens including his own father and the local bishop, and hands his fine clothes over to his father with the news that he is no longer his son. But also many individual episodes in the biographies involve some reversal, or transformation, a turning away from commonly accepted social values, however sensible and rational these may be!¹⁹ Often his followers act in an ordinary human way, and Francis has to correct them and inspire them to reverse their action. Many episodes repeat the drama of worldly aspirations transcended by humility and self-abasement, which then are transmuted into a form of Christian heroism.²⁰

"We cannot imagine Augustine, Anselm, or Bernard," Lawrence Cunningham writes in his book on Francis, *Performing the Gospel*. "But we can imagine

19 A story in the Assisi Compilation tells how once Francis's pants caught on fire. The brothers point it out and rush to extinguish it, but Francis stops them, refuses to allow them to extinguish "brother fire." Ch. 86, *Early Documents*, vol. 2, p. 191. They ignore his prohibition.

20 Bonaventure, *Vita major* ch. 5, *Early Documents* 2, p. 560. Also, ch. 13, where Bonaventure makes Francis, moving towards the stigmata, into a "valiant knight of Christ," and develops the metaphor of combat (wounds are armor etc.), *Early Documents* 2, p. 637.

Francis."²¹ This is partly due to the "huge artistic reservoir at our disposal," says Cunningham. But it's also partly because of the narrative quality of the writings on Francis, the fables.

Also there is a rock-solid consistency in the representation of Francis; wide variation in details of the stories, but none in the fundamental reading of his character and influence, stringently linked to the poor Christ of the gospels. His actions, no matter how miraculous, fabulous, foolish, or mundane, are consistent with that model.

It's very different with Bernard, of whom Jean Leclercq said, "There are now, as there always have been, several Bernards."²² That is part of his problem. By comparison with Francis of Assisi, the damage done by being several persons is apparent. There was a good Bernard (the theologian, the doctor of divine love), and a mixed character, the one observed by his contemporaries.

Francis was only one person. Opposed to the eloquent, formidable, and prolific Bernard, was the unlearned Francis, unencumbered by education, learning, or knowledge, the Francis who shed whatever ties he had to the social order. He is Christ-like without theology and reverent without the doctrinal piety that Thomas of Celano injects into his biography. He often plays the fool, and revels in the role; he casts himself as a knight and troubadour. Johan Huizinga saw in Francis an embodiment of the play-principle.²³ In the center of all the legends we find a character of divine humility, who beams a powerful attraction, both in his humanity and his spirituality.

Now we turn to the difficult "Franciscan question."²⁴ In their wide variety the sources of the life of Francis pose complex questions of "Quellenkritik." Often positions taken seem determined by confessional loyalties, which place an objective judgment of the sources in limbo. The "Franciscan question" is the hard task of sifting out a "historical Francis" from the layers of fable which surround him. In the generally accepted terms of this problem "historical" means "genuine." Augustine Thompson explained the intention of his new biography in these terms: legendary elements are part of the discussion, but are to be separated from historical elements. Thompson makes finer distinctions than

21 Lawrence Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel of Life* (Grand Rapids MI, 2004), p. 133.

22 Jean Leclercq, "Toward a Sociological Interpretation of the Various Saint Bernards," in *Bernardus Magister*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Spencer MA, 1992), pp. 19-33. The effectiveness of the "historical Bernard," Leclercq claims, is accounted for by his charisma, an innate quality, not given by position in society or the church hierarchy. Not conferred, we can add, by his biographies.

23 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston, 1955), p. 139.

24 See Thompson, *New Biography*, pp. 153-70.

others,²⁵ but his book remains in the tradition of searching for the historical Francis with emphasis on naturalistic elements and psychological complexity. Thompson's Francis is more rugged, more troubled, less saintly than the model of holiness of the traditional biography.

The "Franciscan Question"

Jacques Dalarun sees the fabulous elements of the legends as a means of penetrating to the historical elements, but, like Thompson, still keeps that distinction in force. The English translation of his 1996 book, *The Misadventure of Francis of Assisi*, has as its subtitle, *Towards a Historical Use of the Franciscan Legends*. Dalarun summarizes a century of historical research since Paul Sabatier: "One must never lose sight of the layers of legend, but one must never give up the ascent back to the historical Francis of Assisi."²⁶

The problem of sifting the fictional from the historical sources is especially acute for the Catholic scholar. Thompson concedes his personal belief in the reality of miracles in general, but at the same time puts aside the fabulous and miraculous in the legends as unhistorical. This dilemma was brought home to me in a comment by Karen Scott, Professor of Catholic Theology at DePaul University, Chicago, and a well-regarded scholar on hagiography and expert on Catherine of Siena. In a discussion at a colloquium on St. Francis at the University of Chicago, Scott confessed that it is necessary to exclude fabulous elements in the legends from the historical dossier. But she is reluctant to give up her belief in the historical reality of the stigmata. Thompson agreed. (He and Lawrence Cunningham were the other participants in the session.) To be fair, Thompson recognizes a certain "truth" in the legendary elements, but he distinguishes "historical" from "legendary" truth, without pursuing the latter.

My argument is that a critical reading of the legends as "life-writing" distinguishes authentic from inauthentic legends and so rehabilitates the fabulous as revelations of the historical character of Francis. As answer to Brother Maseo's question, "why does everyone follow you?" Franciscan fable can be as useful as Franciscan fact. To reduce Francis to "the historical" person, is to

25 Thompson, *A New Biography*, Intro, p. 8: "The Francis I have come to know has proved a more complex and personally conflicted man than the saint of the legends ... I would also emphasize that my 'Historical Francis' is no more the 'real Francis' than the Francis of the legends and popular biographies. He is 'historical' in that the picture I have painted is the result of historical method, not theological reflection or pious edification."

26 Dalarun, *The Misadventure*, p. 59.

separate out one strong force that made him the man he was, that made so many people “run after him,” to use Brother Masseo’s words. If the historical figure is to be understood as the man separated from his magical shell of charisma and confined to the man of the conventionally verifiable historical sources, then his influence on followers and modern readers will be inexplicable. Brother Masseo saw in Francis only a small, unattractive, inarticulate man, unlearned and plebeian. But he knew that “all the world” ran after him. The large gap between those two perceptions gets filled by stories of Francis’s deeds, both real and invented. But the invented ones cannot be false. They have to be commensurable with the real force that he exerted; they have to be true stories, however fabulous.

The Wolf of Gubbio and His Relatives

“The Wolf of Gubbio” is my first test cast of a fable whose “commensurability”²⁷ is the test of its authenticity. It is one of the best-known stories of Francis.²⁸ Augustine Thompson excludes this story from those with historical value: it is too fabulous and too far away in time from Francis’s life (the *Fioretti* date to second half of the 14th century); it is for him a “hearsay story” (*New Biography*, p. viii).

The story has indirect analogues which precede the fully developed version told by Ugolino Boniscambi of Montegiorgio in *The Deeds of Blessed Francis and his Companions* (second quarter of the 14th century) and adapted in the *Fioretti*. The author of the latter version shortens his source and eliminates bombast. The story runs as follows: Francis is staying in the town of Gubbio. He learns from the terrified townspeople of a wolf which is ravaging the countryside, eating animals and people. Francis goes out of the city gates to find the wolf, defying all warnings. The townspeople accompany him at first but the thought of the wolf’s fierceness frightens them and they return to the safety of

27 Rosalind Brooke, following a similar line of thought, used the term “characteristic.” *The Image of Saint Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006).

28 For commentary see Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 199-217; Roger M Payne, “The Wolf in the Forest: St. Francis and the Italian Eremitical Tradition,” in *Finding Saint Francis in Literature and Art*, eds. Cynthia Ho et al. (New York, 2009), pp. 63-77. Payne gives examples of wolf taming by Francis and others that precede the story as fully developed in the *Fioretti*. The story of the Wolves of Greccio is especially relevant. Henry of Avranches, *Versified Life of Saint Francis* Bk. 9, parag. 42, *Early Works* 3, p. 104.

the town. Francis calls to the wolf, orders him not to hurt him. The wolf appears. When Francis makes the sign of the cross, the wolf lies down at his feet. Francis bawls him out for the harm he has done: he deserves to be put to death like the worst robber or murderer. But instead Francis wants to make peace with him. He forgives him, expresses understanding (the wolf was hungry, therefore he ate what was available), and he makes a pact with the wolf: that if the people of the town will provide food for him, he will never again harm man or animal. The wolf agrees. They shake on it, and they walk back to town together, to the amazement of the townsfolk. He tells them the arrangement salting it with a moral clause: they must repent, give up sinning, and they must put out food for the wolf every day. They keep to their word and the wolf to his. Townsfolk and beast lived in peace until the wolf grew old and died.²⁹

Unquestionably what we have here is a folk tale and fable. But also a genuine charismatic text and authentic source in a charismatological study of Franciscan biography. One note before I argue this case: we should recognize at the outset the comparative naturalism of the tale. There are no miracles. The wolf tamed by the sign of the cross goes in that direction, but any reader inclined to see a religious miracle at work here would get an argument from connoisseurs of canine behavior, who know well that dogs and wolves have a strong sense of the aura of humans. The ability to tame an angry dog is not miraculous; it is a sign of a gifted dog whisperer. And gestures do it along with some mystery of personal presence.³⁰ Francis recognized in the wolf's ferocity a sign that he was starving – also not a supernatural insight. A passerby lacking this insight and unprotected by the aura of the wolf tamer would not have fared well with this or any starving wolf. Also the taming and partial domestication of the wolf is not miraculous, but rather simply a sign that another form of food than live children and animals was preferable to him, and made him reluctant to eat his provider. Both versions, however, have the wolf confirm the contract made in the forest in the presence of the townsfolk. He kneels down (no easy trick for a quadruped), bows his head, and wags his tail in confirmation of his agreement, and miracle trumps wolfish nature in this point.

What we have is a fable based on a not implausible sequence of events, based also on a character with courage – a form of charisma sensed by animals – an understanding of animals, and an idea that generosity and forgiveness are more powerful than weapons and fear.

29 *Fioretti* ch. 21, *Early Works* 3, p. 601-03.

30 I have experience (not my own) on this point, but would rather not push further into the anecdotal.

The two sources in which the story occurs are not stingy with miraculous elements: healings of mortally ill brothers, hosts of angels, consultations of the saint with the holy family in the forest solitude, chariots of fire, and stigmata. But the "Wolf of Gubbio" is a story of charismatic effects aided minimally by supernatural forces.

The mechanism that moves this story is a genuine Franciscan experience: a weak, mild, unarmed man confronts a powerful, dangerous, and murderous being, conquers, tames it, and wins it over by gentleness, courage, and charisma. The same dynamics and narrative structure are at work in the various stories of Francis's conversion of bands of robbers. Three sources record such stories.³¹ The version in the *Mirror of Perfection* is paradigmatic and can spare us rehearsing the other two. It runs as follows: near the hermitage of Borgo San Sepolcro there is a lair of robbers. They come to the brothers to beg food and alms. There is a debate among the brothers whether they should give alms to criminals who rob travellers. Francis gives them instructions how to win their souls. They are to take a supply of bread and wine to the edge of the forest and call out, "Come, brother robbers, come to us, because we are brothers, and we are bringing you some good bread and good wine!" They are to spread a table cloth on the ground, place the bread and wine on it, preaching to them while they eat; make them promise not to strike or harm anyone. Return a second time with more food and drink, and encourage them to give up their criminal ways, convert, and trust in the lord to provide for them. The robbers are persuaded by the brothers' humility and charity. They give up their previous life. Some come to the hermitage and serve the brothers, carrying wood. Others join the order. Others yet confess their sins, do penance for their offences, live by working, and promise never to steal again.

The parallels to the wolf of Gubbio are clear; it needs only the transformation of robbers into wolf,³² and the plot elements and dynamics work for the one as for the other.

31 "The Assisi Compilation" (1244/1260), ch. 115, *Early Documents* 2, p. 221-22; "The Mirror of Perfection" (1318), ch. 66, ed. Sabatier, *Early Documents* 3, p. 310; and in the *Fioretti* (after 1337, before 1390), ch. 26, *Early Documents* 3, p. 609-11.

32 The equation of wolf and robber or thief is explicit in the *Deeds*, 3, p. 483: [Francis speaking to the wolf] "you deserve ... death like a robber or vile murderer;" and in the *Fioretti*, p. 602: "... you are worthy of the gallows as a thief and the worst of murderers." The comparison of robbers to wolves is consistent in the Franciscan writings, and it was an easy step from savage, hungry man to savage, hungry wolf in the progress of increasing congruence with the saint's charisma. Francis assaulted by the sultan's soldiers: [the army] "fell on them like wolves on sheep" (*Early Documents* 2, p. 602) shortly after Francis had cautioned his travelling companion with the words of Christ: "I send you forth like

Finally, there is the story of Francis's trip to Egypt to convert the sultan and the muslim world to Christianity. It is closely related to these tales in structure, basic intent, and charismatic effect. The difference is that the (failed) conversion of the sultan is a historical event, observed and reported on by contemporaries.³³ I will refer to the version of Bonaventure in his *Major Legend* (c.1263).³⁴ Francis travels to the Egyptian city Damietta with one companion. On the way they encounter great dangers. The sultan had announced that he would reward with a gold piece anyone who would bring him the head of a Christian. When the sultan's army confronts them, the muslim soldiers fall upon them "like wolves upon sheep." They put Francis and his companion in chains and drag them before the sultan, postponing their beheading for reasons not addressed in the report. Francis proclaims his purpose to the sultan: he has come in order to convert him. God has sent him, he claims, in order to show the pagans the way to salvation. The sultan is impressed by the courage and passion of the saint. He listens to Francis with interest, and invites him to remain with him. Francis insists on their conversion, and promises to walk barefoot on glowing coals, if they agree to it. Impossible, replies the sultan. If he converted, he would have to fear that his own people would kill him – implying that he would convert if he could. The version in the *Fioretti* has the sultan secretly accept Christianity, but on condition that Francis tell no one, lest the news reach his people and cause a revolt.

The common feature of these stories of wolves, robbers, and sultan is: Francis faces dangers and savage creatures, which no normal person would face, actively seeks them out, and tames or converts or wins their admiration with courage, meekness, generosity, and forgiveness. The victory of gentleness and mercy over strength and power is a fundamental Franciscan experience, perhaps **the** fundamental Franciscan experience. It does not matter that the wolf of Gubbio isn't human or that wolves, though tameable, aren't susceptible to

sheep among wolves" (Matt. 10:16); Bartholomew of Pisa (late 14th cent.): a bandit in the forest near the monastery of San Verecondo was nicknamed "the wolf" ("Lupo") because of his ferocious nature, was converted by Francis, and became a friar. (Payne, "Wolf in the Forest," p. 69.) Paul Sabatier suggested a link in the progression from the tales of converted robbers to the wolf of Gubbio.

33 On the sources see Galm K. Johnson, "Saint Francis and the Sultan: An Historical and Critical Assessment," *Mission Studies* 18 (2001), 146-64; Mahmood Ibrahim, "Francis Preaching to the Sultan: Art and Literature in the Hagiography of the Saint," in *Finding Saint Francis in Literature and Art*, pp. 47-61. Paul Moses's book, *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace* (New York, 2009), is written for a general audience but treats the sources with care.

34 *Major Legend* Ch. 9, parag. 7-9, *Early Documents* 2, pp. 601-03.

human religious symbols – any more than it matters that the robbers of Borgo San Sepulcro and the sultan's soldiers behave like wolves. The experience of mildness overcoming power and violence is a viable strategy of behavior in conflict, not some fabulous invention. It links Francis to other reformers like Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King Jr.: non-violence is an instrument against forces held in power by violence or by the threat of it.

The force of the Franciscan model continued in fiction, drama, film, and opera. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* turns on what we can legitimately call a Franciscan incident: the bishop of Digne, known as Monseigneur Bienvenu, who lives rather like the new pope Francis, welcomes into his house, one night, a desperado named Jean Valjean, escaped, it is said, from the prison at Toulouse and kicked out with scorn and violence from every other place where he seeks refuge. The bishop's housemates, the housekeeper, and his sister are terrified at this house guest, whose appearance is "hideous" and "sinister." They imagine him cutting their throats in the middle of the night. Instead, the desperado commits a lesser crime: he steals the bishop's silver plate and runs away. Caught and brought back by the police, Jean Valjean is welcomed by the bishop, who tells the gendarmes that the convict is his guest, guilty of no crime, that he had given him the silver as a gift. He chides Jean Valjean for leaving without saying goodbye and for not taking also the silver candelabra, which he then adds to the prisoner's loot. The police release him. The bishop admonishes Jean Valjean that with this gift of silver he has bought his soul. He is to give his soul to God and use the silver to make himself an honest man. The convict, who had lost all sense of humanity and goodness, is a changed man and lives from that time on according to the bishop's rule.

In Roberto Rossellini's film, *The Flowers of St. Francis* (1950), a scrawny, weak-minded brother, beat up and reviled by soldiers holding a town under siege, faces down a huge, monstrous warrior with metal spikes on his armor, leader of the besieging troops. Armed with nothing other than a foolish smile and a fixed gaze, Fra Ginepro wins a long staring contest with Nikolaio, the brute. The brother in fact produces some kind of conversion in Nikolaio. Fra Ginepro does nothing to single-handedly bring him out of countenance. It is just the working of some unexplained charismatic force, some supernatural innocence that the warrior sees in the monk's eyes. Nikolai, with fear and wonder in his face, rushes away from Ginepro and declares the siege over. The soldiers turn tail and bolt. The scene obeys the law whereby beatific meekness prevails against brutishness and violence.

The main script writer on the Rossellini film was Federico Fellini. Fellini was sensitive to the meaning and power of the scene. Four years later, he made a film in which a brutish circus strongman travels and performs with a gentle,

saintly woman, borderline retarded, an angelic innocent and secular holy fool named Gelsomina. She becomes a model of gentleness and goodness that the strong man can hold up in contrast to himself, a despised bully, carnival fake and beast, and that model can produce, if not a conversion, at least a moment of illumination and repentance (*La Strada* 1954) – also a Franciscan moment without Francis, though he is not far in the background. Jean Valjean, Rossellini's brutal knight, and Fellini's Zampano, are wolves of Gubbio. At least the force that tames this string of brutes is the same, and the tamed ones, beast or man, are led from recognition to reversal, to a new life or a new disposition, by charismatic, not miraculous force.

False Fables: Incommensurability

That force is where the “authenticity” of the stories is located. The string of fables and fictions that I have just assembled are authentic sources on Francis because they are commensurable with his character and experience as observed by companions, contemporaries, and near-contemporaries. This commensurability constitutes the “truth” of the fables, legitimates their use in understanding the effect of Francis on his world and ours.

While the discipline of charismatology is young (not to say, non-existent), it might not be premature to refer to the critical comparison of narrated events spanning history and legend, as a methodology, a means of verifying insights into the character of a historical figure. As one expects of a methodology, it must also be possible to determine incommensurability. Can a critical reader claim that a given story conveys the effect of the once living subject whereas another is unguanine? Can one determine whether the legends are commensurable with the character of the person as observed and experienced? Here is a test case: the saints' love for animals. Bernard of Clairvaux had compassion for both humans and animals, Geoffrey of Clairvaux says. If Bernard saw a rabbit chased by a dog, or a bird pursued by hawks, he freed it marvelously by the sign of the cross.³⁵ Contrast this exemplum with Thomas of Celano's story of Francis rescuing a rabbit from a trap that one of the brothers had set. Francis calls the rabbit to him and scolds him: “Brother rabbit ... come to me. Why did you let yourself get caught?” The rabbit hops into Francis's arms and settles in. Francis “caresses it with motherly affection,” then lets it go.³⁶ While that “moth-

35 Geoffrey, VP 1. 3. 28, pp. 153-54.

36 Celano, First Life, 1, ch. 21, *Early Documents* 1, p. 235 Any number of stories bear out the image of Francis relating to animals by “motherly affection,” by a combination of charismatic and miraculous power.

erly affection" for animals, and all creatures, echoes in myriad other stories of Francis, nothing else in Bernard's memorials answers to Geoffrey's anecdote, to my knowledge. A real love of animals is inferable from the stories of Francis, not of Bernard. The comparison also shows up the narrative blandness of Geoffrey of Clairvaux over against the vividness and charm of the biographers of Francis. The passage highlights Bernard more as miracle-worker than lover of animals. Animals are fetched onto the stage to create admiration for Bernard; then they exit and play no further role. Francis accorded them the status of his human followers.

The Truth of the Stigmata

Francis's experience of the stigmata is not omitted in any major source on his life. It has to cause some uneasiness to the critical historian.³⁷ The historian who says, "I reject the other miracle stories but hold onto the stigmata as theophany" – does so at the cost of compromised historical method. The appearance of Christ's wounds on Francis's body, the role of the crucified seraph in producing them, the bleeding wound in his side, are legend more than history. In his *Francis of Assisi* (p. 117), Augustine Thompson holds to the appearance of the wounds as reality and says most historians accept them as such (p. 117), but doesn't mention Richard Trexler's trenchant dismantling of the sources. "The reality of the stigmata of Francis cannot be proven on the historical plane," writes Vauchez in his *Francis of Assisi* (p. 227).

And yet the appearance of the wounds of Christ on Francis's body has a stringent logic to it, related to the whole cast of Francis's life. The idea of this event, however miraculous or supernatural, strengthens a conception of Francis congruent with his life, his thought, his imitation of the poor Christ of the gospels. It has the truth of extravagant poetry and is commensurable with the character and charisma of the saint.

37 Richard Trexler, "The Stigmatized Body of Francis of Assisi: Conceived, Processed, and Disappeared," in *Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter: Politisch-Soziale Kontexte, Visuelle Praxis, Körperliche Ausdrucksformen*, ed. Klaus Schreiner (Munich, 2002), pp. 463-97. See also Carolyn Muessig, "Signs of Salvation: The Evolution of Stigmatic Spirituality before Francis of Assisi," *Church History* 82 (2013), 40-62; Jacques Dalarun, "Renovata sunt per eum antiqua miracula: les stigmates de Francois d'Assise entre remploi et novitas," in *Remploi, citation, plagiat: Conduites et pratiques médiévales (Xe-XIe siècle)*, eds. Pierre Toubert and Pierre Moret (Madrid, 2009), pp. 53-72.

Charisma and the “Historical” Person

The critical act of judging stories for their commensurability with the character and actions of the religious or political leader, is a basic methodology of charismatology, and the historicity or fictionality of the material is an insignificant distinction. Ronald Reagan was a charismatic leader. He liked the story of a WW II bomber pilot whose plane was shot down and who went down with the ship rather than abandon his wounded navigator. Reagan told it as historical fact. The story stuck and seemed to characterize Reagan himself, who had never been a pilot or served in WW II. It was not historical fact, but the story of a movie he had played in. But it fit, was congruent with whatever charismatic force determined the popular image of Reagan. George H.W. Bush was a WW II fighter pilot; he was shot down, survived, and was rescued. But that story made no particular impact, because it didn't stick. He did not project the charisma that would have “validated” the story. For Bush, it was just history. It wasn't “true” in the sense that Reagan's heroics were true, because Bush senior was not a heroic personality, however brave, devoted, patriotic his character in fact. Reagan seemed heroic, however slim his track record of heroism. Bush was heroic without a heroic aura; Reagan had and projected a heroic aura. He was in his life a fictional character, as are many actors and politicians. Fact is not what the life-writing of charismatic figures is about, though it helps solidify the image when it is in the mix.

Life-writing wants and needs fantasy to bring the real, factual activities of a charismatic into congruence with his charismatic influence, just as the hagiographer needs stories that bring the saint's life in line with Christian doctrine and Christian mythology. If history doesn't supply them, the imagination must invent them, or form them from what the “knowledge” of the saint's presence means and inspires. That opens a flood of sources and documents to relevance in the case of Francis.

This approach to the historian's vexed problem of fiction in history can bring some clarity into what is a deeply problematic concept, “the historical person,” “the historical Jesus,” or “Francis,” or “Ronald Reagan.” If “the historical person” is to be understood as the man as which sober, factual historical evidence, emptied of subjective elements, fables, miracles, party-political claims, reveal him, then the very concept, “historical person,” will remain undefinable, mystical, and unapproachable. The quest for a historical figure, a composting of verifiable facts and recorded observations, will always, given our empirical mind-set, run into the confusing overlay of the supernatural or legendary or hyped anecdotal. The removal of myth and miracle is a potential distortion of the character. I recently had an exchange of letters, to put it nostalgically

– actually, e-mails, with a colleague, who invited me to imagine Louis XIV in his underwear and sent along a 19th-century caricature of the sun king to help out my imagination. The idea was that I would see the real person of the monarch by stripping him of his trappings of state, mere silly excess. But to reduce the king in this way is to grossly distort the historical figure. The real effect he had on his subjects, on French society and law, on European history, depended on his personality, glory-bound with royal authority, inflated by the silly, excessive trappings of kingship and brightly lit-up by myth (“sun king,” center of the universe, enthroned in the utopian “city of the sun”). If someone should observe the king in his underwear, then that scene itself had to be mythically inflated, the king in his naked state vested with appropriate mythical power, the use of the toilet transformed into solemn ceremony.³⁸ From this point of view (historical impact), the king in his underwear is a falsehood, a distortion of the historical figure. And the same is true of St. Francis stripped of stigmata and miracles natural or supernatural. Only an anatomist could warm to the wisdom that says the naked living presence is the person, and only an empirical-scientific historian could demand reduction to “the bare facts” in the pursuit of historical reality.

The genius of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* as a contribution to the psychology of charisma is in gradually removing from the old king his kingship and all its trappings and posing the question, what is the man without them? Once reduced to “the thing itself, unaccommodated man,” the king’s person dissolves into insanity, or rather, he loses “personhood.” *Persona* is the Latin word for “mask,” a significant joining of personhood with the person’s outer surface. The “person” unmasked, the individual without the accretion of gifts, talents, without rank and authority, means the reduction to less than human. Take away a king’s regalia, throne, retinue, and you take away those things that constitute his “person.” Having given up his throne and lost “the large effects that troop with majesty,” Lear discovers that without them he is nothing, that “the thing itself” is an absence. Lear’s insanity is the loss of “*persona*” in both senses.³⁹

I’ll just add a few reflections on the psychology of charisma and the myth-making impulse in the disciple. Charisma awakens in the devotee the urge to be like the charismatic. A chain of charismatic influence links Christ, Francis, his followers, and presumably most members of the Franciscan order,

38 See the description of the *Levéé* in Saint-Simon’s memoirs and the chapter of Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* devoted to Saint-Simon’s narrative.

39 I develop these ideas further in an article “Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory. And *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime*, n. 1 above.

transforming the disciple at each stage, whether weakly or strongly, into a semblance of the higher model. The awareness of that linkage is awakened, renewed, and strengthened by reading or hearing the gospel, the stories and legends of Francis, the actions of others, real or fictional, like Francis. The followers are drawn into his world by an impulse that imitates if it does not reproduce the linkage of Francis to Christ. They want to live in that world where they can submerge their own identities into those of the master. They want to live according to the laws and the values, the moral and spiritual climate of that world. The presence of the charismatic – real, remembered, or imagined – stimulates the imagination, makes the disciple into an artist or novelist writing the world of Francis in his imagination. He injects himself into that world, like the audience in a drama, sees with the vision of the master, experiences with the master's sensorium, and dreams his dreams. The records of the growth of the collective imagining of the charismatic and his disciples tend towards literary modelling. Hence the progression from Celano and Bonaventure to the *Fioretti*, and from the *Fioretti* to Roberto Rossellini, Nikos Kazantzakis, and many others. A progress from fact to fable is innate in any charismatic relationship.

Living in a model is a mode of being that is both real and fictional at the same time. In imitating Christ, or Francis, the disciple is engaged in make-believe based on a faith in the gospels, biographical stories, and legends. Imitation of a charismatic is a performance with the scenario written into the performer's perception of the model. Mimesis is representation, not only in narrative, but also when a living person imitates a once living person.⁴⁰ Imitation of a model is lived and experienced representation. Or should we say that imitation of Christ – or Gandhi or Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King Jr. – is artificial? Disingenuous play-acting? But we know as a fact of western, in fact, world history, that such imitation can be charged with power to change society and to influence history, as the case of the four charismatics I just mentioned demonstrates. The devotee in the spell of the charismatic figure – even generations after his death – needs that store of anecdote, story, and fable to reawaken the memory and restore the inspiring power of the model so as to continually reactivate the impulse to imitate, to live like he did. The biographer as life-writer will tell his stories, not just in order to artificially pump up the saint's qualifications for sainthood, but to revivify the quasi-living presence of the saint. That presence must be revived as an experience, sensed and lived. Stories like the stigmata or Francis's face to face consultation with God on the

40 Imitation of a model, living or fictional – not narrative representation – is the context of *mimesis* in Greek philosophy – Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Franciscan rule, or Francis appearing to his followers in a chariot of fire, dramatic, sensual, and immediate in the extreme, are aids to mental resurrection of the saint. We find the answer to Masseo's question in stories like those that convey the effect of Francis's presence.



A comparison of the biographies of Bernard and Francis will inevitably make Francis appear as a far more appealing character than Bernard, engaged to the tip of his tonsure, and at risk to his life, in human affairs and created nature. Bernard was also deeply engaged in human and ecclesiastical affairs, but not happily. They often involved the difficult saint and others in difficulties.

And yet, though the stories of his miraculous working were dull and standardized according to the prerequisites of sainthood and stories of his personality did not make him appealing, but rather off-putting, Bernard of Clairvaux was a charismatic figure – not because of his biographies, which gave him no life or dynamism. The dynamics of Francis's story, however, were powerful enough that Dante could rehearse its major points in nearly a full canto of the *Divine Comedy*.⁴¹ Dante felt clearly what charismatic force there was in the events of Francis's life and expressed it in the outcry, "His wonder-working life were better sung by Heaven's highest angels" (*Paradise* 11. 96-97).

And yet, Bernard stood higher in Dante's view of the afterlife. In *Paradise* Canto 31, Dante turns from the realm of the blest back to his guide, Beatrice, only to find her gone and replaced by "an elder in the robes of Heaven's saints. His eyes, his cheeks, were filled with the divine joy of the blest, his attitude with love that every tender-hearted father knows." (*Paradise* 31. 60-65). Bernard of Clairvaux, not Beatrice leads the pilgrim Dante to the highest realms of heaven and the vision of God. Having seen heaven through contemplation while alive he is the proper guide (*Paradise* 32. 111).

Dante derived this image of Bernard not from the writings about Bernard, but from Bernard's own writings. We have been measuring Bernard by works of little imaginative power and contrasting him to Francis, conveyed in works of great charm and charisma. Francis had all the charismatic texts; Bernard had only the ones that he himself wrote.⁴² His posthumous charisma was self-acti-

⁴¹ *Paradise*, 11. 40-117.

⁴² Bernard the charismatic is far more present and alive in his own theological writings than in his biography. And that claim is practically a quotation of Geoffrey of Clairvaux, who admitted how little able his own biography was to capture the character of Bernard, and referred the reader instead to Bernard's works: "The saintly manners and character of our

vated, called into effect in his sermons on the Song of Songs and his other sermons and tracts. These works radiate life, energy, and passion, in a way his biographies do not.

There is a curious witness to Bernard himself at work administering his fame through his writings – posthumously. In 1423 the abbot of Saint Albans, John Whetamstede, fell mortally ill on a trip to Rome. He had a dream in which none other than Bernard of Clairvaux, nearly 200 years dead, appeared to him and cured his sickness. But the ghostly healer had set conditions on his doctoring: he stipulated that from that time on Abbot John should read and distribute only the writings of – Bernard of Clairvaux.⁴³ Post-mortem self promotion is a good trick if you can do it, I suppose, and a useful skill for scholars, whose works are generally either absorbed or forgotten or both, in one generation.

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father ... emerge so clearly in his own writings, that it seems he had created an effigy and a mirror of himself in them." See my article, "Bernhard von Clairvaux: Charisma und Exemplarität," in *Exemplaris imago: Ideale in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Nicholas Staubach (Frankfurt, 2012), pp. 119-35.

43 Bredero, *Cult and History*, p. 161.

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Charismatic Rulers in Civic Guise: Images of the Nine Worthies in Northern European Town Halls of the 14th-16th Centuries

Andrey Egorov

A stark black-and-white photograph from the holdings of the *Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln* displays a wall of a ruined building (fig. 6.1). The roof of the former structure is missing, its floor covered in dust and small debris, the plaster almost completely vanished, exposing the dense fabric of darkened brickwork. Yet the elaborately carved Gothic screen of gable-ornamented piers, baldachins, and finials – heavily covered in soot from a fire – is still largely preserved. Conspicuously absent, however, are the sculptural figures that once occupied the nine niches in its central register. As it happens, their original presence is paradoxically and traumatically emphasized in the traces of their very disappearance – the clearly legible whitish anthropomorphic outlines. Contemplating this lonely wall, left standing in the exposed interior, we become aware that in a sense this entire space once belonged – and still belongs – to the missing figures.

The picture under consideration shows the southern wall of the 14th-century *Hansasaal*, the oldest part of the historic town hall of Cologne. It was taken in the aftermath of the heavy bombardment of the city by the Royal Air Force on 29 June 1943.¹ The nine limestone sculptures – the most important and recognizable pictorial feature of the *Hansasaal* – had actually been removed shortly beforehand, and stowed in the vaulted cellar of the town hall (where they would still be seized by fire and seriously damaged).² The postwar

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- 1 Lucia Hagendorf-Nußbaum and Norbert Nußbaum, *Der Hansasaal, Köln: Das gotische Rathaus und seine historische Umgebung*, eds. Walter Geis and Ulrich Krings, *Stadtspuren – Denkmäler in Köln* 26 (Cologne, 2000), p. 376.
- 2 *Ibid.*; Walter Geis, “Die Neun Guten Helden, der Kaiser und die Privilegien,” in *Köln: Das gotische Rathaus* (see above, note 1), pp. 387-413.



FIGURE 6.1 Cologne town hall, Hansasaal, south wall after the air strike. 1943
(PHOTO: RHEINISCHES BILDARCHIV KÖLN, RBA 56 237).

decades saw the virtually destroyed town hall slowly rebuilt, and the figures restored. In the early 1970s, they were back in the new *Hansasaal*, at last filling the empty niches captured on that haunting war-time photograph.³ Nowadays, they can rightfully be designated as a collective symbol of the Rhine city's well-being. But what are these figures, and why was their absence so threatening – not only in view of the historic integrity of the *Rathaus*, but of Cologne's very identity?

With the exception of three decades, this sculptural group has for centuries occupied the southern wall of the *Hansasaal* (fig. 6.2). Dated to c.1330, it represents a popular medieval subject known as the Nine Worthies. Rooted in the literary tradition of courtly romance, it has thus likely originated in the sophisticated milieu of chivalric aristocracy.⁴ The tightly-knit group is comprised of nine exemplary heroes of the past – noble warriors and victorious rulers, the glorious possessors of the whole gamut of manly virtues, “the best that ever were,” in the words of William Caxton.⁵ Their respective French, German, and Dutch appellations (*les neuf preux*, *die Neun Guten Helden*, *de negen besten*) ascertain their valiancy, magnanimity, and superiority to common people. Shown here anachronistically as 14th-century knights, dressed in full armor and duly equipped with offensive weapons, the permanent membership of the Nine Worthies actually stands for the three consecutive ages of world history, characterized by religious allegiance. Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar belong to the pagan era, Joshua, King David, and Judas Maccabeus to the Jewish (Old Testament) era, while King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon personify the Christian era. Their primary identifying attributes are fanciful coats of arms (usually on shields and banners), often independently included in armorials.⁶

3 Ibid., pp. 409-10.

4 Two comprehensive monographic studies of the theme are Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies in Literatur und bildender Kunst* (Göttingen, 1971), and Wim van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer. De Negen Besten in de Nederlanden (1300-1700)* (Amsterdam, 1997). An examination of its occurrence in pictorial arts is provided in Robert L. Wyss, “Die neun Helden: eine ikonographische Studie,” *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 17 (1957), 73-106.

5 “Caxton's Preface,” in *Le Mort Darthur by Syr Thomas Malory: The Original Edition of William Caxton*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, Vol. 1 (London, 1889), leaf 1r.

6 For the description of the Nine Worthies' coats of arms, see Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, pp. 225-50, and pp. 261-302 for a series of comparative charts of the armorials given to the Nine Worthies (as well as their female counterparts) in different regional and cultural settings.



FIGURE 6.2 The Nine Worthies. C. 1330. Limestone, originally polychromed. Cologne town hall, south wall of the Hansesaal (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

Self-evidently, however, the sculptures of the Nine Worthies in the *Hansasaal* were not produced for the noble domain of princely castles, but placed in an imposing civic hall amid the hustle and bustle of a late medieval metropolis.⁷ What is more, they might actually be the first known and surviving visual manifestation of the Nine Worthies anywhere – the initial step in their documented pictorial career.⁸

The Nine Worthies were familiar to the townsmen, being mentioned in the writings of city clerks, and represented in open-air processions and pageants.⁹ But why were these mythic knights, revered in aristocratic circles, pictured in town halls – the most important public buildings of Northern European civic communes, which for centuries have been engaged in political maneuvering and military struggle to attain independence from their territorial lords?¹⁰ Was

7 A discussion of the sculptures, their stylistic features, dating, and iconography, as well as the vicissitudes of their modern reception and post-World War II treatment, can be found in Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 387-413. For the *Hansasaal* and its iconographic program, see Fried Mühlberg, "Der Hansasaal des Kölner Rathauses," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 36 (1974), 65-98; for architectural and restoration/reconstruction history of the hall, see Lucia Hagendorf-Nußbaum and Norbert Nußbaum, *Der Hansasaal*, pp. 337-86. The name *Hansasaal* was first applied to the hall only in the later 18th century; its earliest known appellation is "*groissen Sal*," or the great hall (Ibid., p. 337). An outline of the Cologne town hall's architectural makeup is given in Stefan Albrecht, *Mittelalterliche Rathäuser in Deutschland. Architektur und Funktion* (Darmstadt, 2004), pp. 150-54.

8 On the sculptures' dating, see Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 400-03.

9 Van Anrooij, *Helden van weeler*, p. 41, pp. 167-71. The first documented civic pageant that featured the Nine Worthies took place in Arras in 1336. Among other known instances, cited by Van Anrooij, were public spectacles in Oudenaarde (where the Worthies became a staple of the annual Sacrament processions, 1411-1530s), Kortrijk (1417/18), Aalst (1447), Dendermonde (1470), and Dordrecht (1485).

10 At least since the early 14th century, the town halls in the geographic and cultural area that encompasses the Holy Roman Empire and the Low Countries, built mainly for the purpose of the urban governments' self-representation on behalf of the communes, have been richly furnished with imagery in a broad range of media. The distinctive tradition of late medieval civic iconography, encompassing a variety of secular and Christian themes, differs in important ways from the humanism-driven urban visual culture in the 16th-18th centuries. See Stephan Albrecht, "Rathaus," in *Handbuch der Politischen Ikonographie*, eds. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke, and Hendrik Ziegler (Munich, 2011), 2, pp. 273-79; Hartmut Boockmann, "Rathäuser," in *Die Stadt im späten Mittelalter* (Munich, 1986), pp. 125-49; Susan Tipton, *Res publica bene ordinata: Regentenspiegel und Bilder vom guten Regiment. Rathausdekorationen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Hildesheim, 1996); Ulrich Meier, "Vom Mythos der Republik: Formen und Funktionen spätmittelalterlicher Rathausikonographie in Deutschland und Italien," in *Mundus in imagine: Bildersprache und Lebenswelten im Mittelalter. Festgabe für Klaus Schreiner*, eds. Andrea Löther et al. (Munich, 1996), pp.

it a case of pragmatic appropriation of the iconic templates of sovereignty, or perhaps a matter of the Nine Worthies' overpowering charisma – a set of unique qualities that cannot be encompassed when reduced to fixed meanings, yet which the late medieval magistrates desired to make their own? Are these options mutually contradictory at all? In this essay, we shall focus on three case-studies which demonstrate how the iconographic theme of the Nine Worthies has been embedded in the pictorial system of the town hall, and what kind of interpretations this has occasioned.

The chosen examples are not the only known depictions of the Nine Worthies in town halls, or civic space more broadly, and our goal is not to provide a detailed overview. Rather, it consists in focusing on the workings of those visually arresting and representative monuments – different in scale, medium, and dating – which amount to the telling *moments* of the Nine Worthies' appearance in town halls.¹¹

It is held that the literary *topos* of the Nine Worthies made its first appearance in several verses of the widely-disseminated vernacular Alexander

345-87; Ursula Lederle, *Gerechtigkeitsdarstellungen in deutschen und niederländischen Rathäusern* (Philippburg, 1937); Juliaan H.A. de Ridder, *Gerechtigheidsstaferelen voor schepenhuisen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden in de 14de, 15de en 16de eeuw* (Brussels, 1989).

11 Among other town hall representations of the subject, we should mention the sandstone sculptures from the facade of the *Oude Raadhuis* of Kampen. From this series, figures of Alexander the Great and Charlemagne, dated to c. mid-15th century, survive, albeit in a weathered state. They are conserved at the Stedelijk Museum Kampen (Koormarktspoort). See Harry A. Tummers, "De oude stadhuisbeelden in Veere, verslag van het onderzoek naar de historische en kunsthistorische waarde van de zeven stadhuisbeelden in de Schotse Huizen te Veere," *Praktijkboek Instandhouding Monumenten*, II-11, 27 (The Hague, 2006), pp. 6-8. In Lübeck, painted depictions of the Nine Worthies on metal-plated oak-wood panels were also placed on the town hall facade. See Susan Tipton, *Res publica bene ordinata*, p. 343. Notably, the Nine Worthies were incorporated in the iconographic programs of two important civic fountains. They are among the 40 carved-stone figures of the *Schöne Brunnen* on Nuremberg's market square (c.1385-96), and their coats of arms are displayed in the heraldic register of the lead-cast *Altstadtbrunnen* in Braunschweig (1408). Both monuments exist today as modern replicas and assorted original fragments. See Ludwig Zintl, *Der Schöne Brunnen in Nürnberg und seine Figuren. Geschichte und Bedeutung eines Kunstwerkes* (Nuremberg, 1993); Erhard Metz and Gerd Spies, eds., *Der Braunschweiger Brunnen auf dem Altstadtmarkt* (Braunschweig, 1988). The popularity of the *topos* in urban communes is likewise attested by a monument commissioned by guild authorities (rather than the magistrates): the extensive painted softwood wainscoting of the assembly hall of the Augsburg weaver's guild house, executed in 1456-57 by Peter Kaltenofer, now in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich (inv. MA 856-MA 860). See Jörg Rogge, "Die Bildzyklen in der Amtsstube des Weberzunfthauses in Augsburg von 1456/57," in *Mundus in imagine* (see above, note 10). pp. 319-23.

romance *Les Voeux du Paon*, written in 1312-13 by the Lotharingian poet Jacques du Longuyon for his patron – the prince-bishop of Liege, Theobald of Bar.¹² In spite of this, the scholar Wim Van Anrooij has argued that Longuyon, who introduced the Worthies as a colorful aside while describing the siege of Ephesus by the Indian army of the brave King Porus, had in fact based his description of the nine characters on the Middle Dutch poem *Van neghen den besten*, which devotes its 700 lines exclusively to the Worthies. This text might have originated in the 1280s, and can even be ascribed to the famous Flemish erudite Jacob Van Maerlant.¹³

Speaking of the semantic structure of the *topos*, and specifically of the historical-religious divisions among the Nine Worthies, it must be said that they are commonly seen as referencing St. Augustine's concept of the spiritual progress of mankind in three consequent stages that resolve in the fourth stage: *ante legem* (before the law), *sub lege* (under the law), *sub gratia* (under grace), and ultimately, *sub pace* (under peace). This process is mirrored in the development of an individual human soul.¹⁴ Echoing this pattern, the Nine Worthies can be envisioned as the key actors in the grand narrative of the linear unfolding of the history of Salvation – as the secular, mortal leaders of this seminal quest.¹⁵ Noticeably, this also endows the three triads with an eschatological dimension. Prefiguring one another as types and antitypes, the Nine Worthies are meant to embody the most prominent and glorious worldly recipients of the gifts of grace in each successive period – as such, of course, they are charismatic figures in a literal sense.¹⁶

12 For a critical overview of the origins and early dissemination of the motif, see Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, pp. 41-61, and Van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer*, pp. 33-54.

13 Van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer*, pp. 55-73.

14 St. Augustine, *Commentary on Statements in the Letter of Paul to the Romans* (394/395). For the concept's elucidation, see Paula Frederiksen, "Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola apostoli ad Romanos," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), pp. 345-46. It is noteworthy that this principle explicitly underlies the typological-exegetical program of the famous Verdun Altar (Ambo) in the abbey of Klosterneuburg. See Arwed Arnulf, "Studien zum Klosterneuburger Ambo und den theologischen Quellen bildlicher Typologien von der Spätantike bis 1200," *Wiener Jahrbuch der Kunstgeschichte* 48 (1995), 9-41.

15 The canonical sequence of the Nine Worthies was given a (misinformed, but characteristic) chronological attestation in the verses accompanying their woodcut depictions pasted in the armorial of Gilles le Bouvier (Paris, BnF, Ms. Fr. 4985, dated c.1450-70). Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, p. 49.

16 On charisma as a gift of grace, see Martino Rossi Monti, "The Mask of Grace. On Body and Beauty of Soul between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages" in this volume.



FIGURE 6.3 *Master of the Cité des Dames. The Nine Worthies in Tommaso di Saluzzo, Le Chevalier Errant. Paris, c.1403-05. Tempera, gold and ink on parchment. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 12559, fol. 125r (PHOTO: BNF).*

In the later 14th century, writers like Jean Le Fèvre (*Livre de Leesce*, 1373-87), Eustache Deschamps (the ballads *Il est temps de faire la paix*, 1387, and *Si les héros revenaient sur la terre, ils seraient étonnés*, 1396), and marquis Tommaso di Saluzzo (*Le Chevalier Errant*, c.1394) (fig. 6.3) continued to develop the subject and supplemented the Nine Worthies with female counterparts, striving for balance, symmetry, and intellectual excitement. Not least of all, the sophisticated codes of gender relations and hierarchies of the aristocratic audiences demanded inclusive sets of male and female characters to identify with.¹⁷

One of the most sumptuous testimonies to the preoccupation with the Nine Worthies within the top echelons of European aristocracy at the turn of the 14th century is the incompletely surviving set of monumental tapestries that belonged to Jean, the powerful Duke of Berry, now in the Cloisters Museum.¹⁸ In another telling example, the two miniatures of the lavishly executed *Le Chevalier Errant* manuscript in Paris, the male and female Worthies are shown standing in castle-hall interiors, which evoke the fabled “palace of the elected” (*palais aux élus*), a location where the romance’s wandering protagonist encounters them.¹⁹ In the 1420s, the *neuf preux* and *neuf preuses* found their way to a real noble abode when they were depicted in the remarkable frescoes adorning the grand hall (*Sala Baronale*) of Tommaso’s Piedmontese familial castle, La Manta. The tall, elegant figures comprise a stunning frieze, as if strolling through idyllic pastoral settings one after another and encouraging the viewer to join them. The accompanying versed inscriptions, in French, are meant to be read (perhaps aloud) as the personal utterances of the legendary

17 Jean Le Fèvre’s *neuf preuses* were Semiramis, Sinope, Hippolyta, Melanippe, Lampedo, Penthesilea, Tomyris, Teuta, and Deipyle. The female Worthies, however, would neither attain their male counterparts’ fixed membership, or the neat division into three historical triads (first introduced only in Hans Burgkmair the Elder’s series of prints of 1516-18). See Ingrid Sedlacek, *Die Neuf Preuses: Heldinnen des Spätmittelalters* (Marburg, 1997); Ann McMillan, “Men’s Weapons, Women’s War: The Nine Female Worthies, 1400-1640,” *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 113-39; Horst Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies*, pp. 168-73; Van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer*, pp. 89-97; Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, “Penthésilée, reine des Amazones et Preuse, une image de la femme guerrière à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 20 (2004), 169-79.

18 James J. Rorimer, Margaret B. Freeman, “The Nine Heroes Tapestries at the Cloisters,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, 7, no. 9 (May, 1949), 243-60.

19 BnF, Ms fr. 12559, fol. 125r (the male Worthies), fol. 125v (the female Worthies). The manuscript was likely commissioned by Tommaso di Saluzzo himself in 1403-05 and richly illuminated by the Master of the *Cité des Dames*. See Florence Bouchet, *L’iconographie du Chevalier errant de Thomas de Saluces* (Turnhout, 2014).

heroes and heroines.²⁰ The three mentioned examples offer distinctive models of the audience's engagement with the exalted subject, imposed by the relative scale, conventions, and affective properties of the artistic medium: from the delicate stylization of the illuminated page to the rich festive textures of tapestries and the precise linear rhythms of the frescoes, relatable to the human body.

It should be said that no representations of the Nine Female Worthies are known to have existed in town halls, which seems understandable, given the civic councils' exclusively male lineup, a fact that in many ways determined the character of their political and legal routine. There is, however, an important documented instance of the female Worthies' appearance in the public space of urban streets and squares – as part of the ceremonial proceedings of Joanna of Castile's royal entry into Brussels, which took place in December 1496. The allegoric *tableaux vivants* staged for the duchess featured the female Nine Worthies as the true paragons of womanly virtue, and they figure among the 63 watercolor miniatures of the manuscript commissioned by the city authorities to commemorate the event.²¹ Still, the visual field of the town hall per se belonged exclusively to the aldermen, and catered to their own ambitions and ideals of social comparison.

20 The murals, executed by the eponymous Master of the *Castello della Manta*, were commissioned by Tommaso's illegitimate son, Valerano di Saluzzo, who likely had himself portrayed as Hector, and his wife Clemenza di Provana as Penthesilea. Apart from the 18 Worthies, the iconographic program of the hall includes a busy scene of the Fountain of Youth, heraldic imagery, as well as Christ's Crucifixion, the figures of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Quentin. See Daniel Arasse, "Portrait, mémoire familiale et liturgie dynastique: Valerano-Hector au château de Manta," in *Il ritratto e la memoria*, 1, ed. Augusto Gentili (Rome, 1989), pp. 93-112; Anne Dunlop, *Painted Palaces: The Rise of Secular Art in Early Renaissance Italy* (University Park, 2009), pp. 148-53; Lorenz Enderlein, "The Wandering Mind: Concepts of Late Medieval Allegory in the Painted Chamber of the La Manta Castle," *Meaning in Motion. The Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art*, eds. Nino Zchomelidse and Giovanni Freni (Princeton, 2011), pp. 233-65. The Nine Worthies also feature in an extensive fresco cycle adorning the Summer House of the Runkelstein castle in South Tyrol amidst other fabled triads of the best and noblest knights, love pairs, swordsmen, giants, and dwarves. See Haug Walter, "Das Bildprogramm im Sommerhaus von Runkelstein," in *Runkelstein: die Wandmalereien des Sommerhauses* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 15-62.

21 Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78.D.5. Anne-Marie Legaré, "Joanna of Castile's Entry into Brussels: Viragos, Wise and Virtuous Women," in *Virtue Ethics for Women, 1250-1500*, eds. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Dordrecht, 2011), pp. 177-86.

Bearing in mind these preliminary considerations, let us now return to the town hall of Cologne, which still serves its original function. The central, instantly striking feature of the Nine Worthies sculptures when one faces them in the *Hansasaal* is their ability to provoke a strong sensation of lifelikeness and bodily presence (phenomenological effects associated with the inherent mimetic potential of sculpture in the round, but which still required to be purposefully attained). The characters we are examining were by all counts extraordinary individuals – “superheroes” that once *actually existed*, but long ago acquired purely *legendary* status. We can assume, therefore, that to “enliven” them was the pressing challenge of the unknown master carvers. The substitution of the Worthies’ transitory bodies with congenial iconic portrayals, which referenced the prototypes, but were self-sufficient in their artistry and plastic vivacity, would naturally contribute to the effect of what Stephen Jaeger designates as “charismatic art.”²²

At least three factors are at work here.²³ Firstly, our attention is drawn by the impressive microarchitectural framework of the group. Arranged in a rhythmical horizontal row, the figures of the Nine Worthies are integrated into a screen-wall of Late Gothic morphology: they stand on tall cornered piers, crowned with intricate baldachins with finials. Of course, such a layout instantly reminds one of the arrays of saintly figures on the jambs of church portals, and this analogy seems to have been consciously pursued. After all, a richly articulated sculptural portal was instituted by this period as a time-honored, recognizable structure proven to generate auratic and symbolically rich experience.

Secondly, the allure of the almost life-sized figures is enforced by the skillful manipulation of the medium’s expressive qualities. One instantly takes notice of the Worthies’ lively, yet balanced poses, obtained through a slight *contraposto*, and the soft modeling of the surface, especially of the hefty folds at the gathering parts of their long tunics. Importantly, the now unpainted limestone sculptures were originally polychromed. In the course of the extensive restoration of the *Hansasaal*, undertaken in the 1860s, the Cologne Nine Worthies

22 The relationship between artistic practice and charisma is explored in detail in C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 11–57, 63–66.

23 For a discussion of the rising critical awareness of the material presence of artifacts and the existential status of images in art historical practice, see Keith Moxey, “Visual Studies and the Iconic Turn,” in *Visual Time. The Image in History* (Durham, NC, 2013), pp. 53–75. The most comprehensive overview of the central theoretical and social issues of the interplay between depiction and presence, analyzed in the cultic domain, is given in Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994).

acquired a thick light-reflecting oil-based coating, which could not be as seamless and natural as the original tempera color scheme (light-toned and opaque) would have been. This modern paint, which obviously reflected the tastes of the 19th-century romantic medievalism, was melted away by fire during the 1943 bombardment of the city.²⁴

Finally, the application of an essentially dramatic body language, through gestures and postures, attains crucial significance for the enlivening effect of the whole group – endowing it, as it were, with a sense of vivid theatricality. While some of the Worthies stand militant (Godfrey of Bouillon), others are tense (Judas Maccabeus), or shown, by way of contrast, in an absorbed, pensive state (King Arthur).²⁵

So, are there any iconographic peculiarities that might hint on the purpose of this emotionally charged image? First of all, the “correct” left-to-right sequence of the triads making up the Nine Worthies (the pagans-the Jews-the Christians), known to have been reshuffled in various representations,²⁶ has been laterally changed in this case too. The progression is initiated by the Christians and closed by the pagans, with the Jewish Worthies, wearing the characteristic pointed hats, the *Jüdenhütte*, acting as the central group. The focal point, therefore, belongs to King David, captured in a belligerent pose, ambivalently sheathing or unsheathing his sword. We do not know if this compositional and affective emphasis has anything to do with the fact that for as much as two centuries before the period under our consideration the Cologne town hall had been standing in the midst of the town’s Jewish quarter (as early as 1149 it was called the *domus civium inter iudeos sita*).²⁷ According to the most recent dating of the Nine Worthies sculptures, they had been put into place more than a decade before the violent pogrom of August 1349, which broke out in the wake of the bubonic plague and even caused a fire in the town hall.²⁸

24 Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 406-10.

25 Parts of the figures’ faces, hand-gestures, and clothing, damaged in the 1943 fire, had to be supplemented by the restorers in the 1950s-60s, based on historical photographs. *Ibid.*, pp. 409-10. It should be said that the affective aspects of the sculptures that we are describing were not critically altered or amplified; though, as Geis mentions, a commitment to the post-War modernist aesthetic is clearly discernible in the attention to the figures’ bare material surface.

26 For example, cf. below our observations on the Nine Worthies group pictured in the stained-glass windows of the town hall of Lüneburg.

27 Stephan Albrecht, *Mittelalterliche Rathäuser*, p. 150.

28 After the official eviction of the Jewish community from Cologne in 1424, the council decreed to convert the synagogue-religious school opposite the town hall into the magistrate’s chapel, the *Ratskapelle*, which survived, in a reconstructed and restored state,

More specifically, however, the upward-oriented central vector of the sculptural group provides further clues. At the apex of the framing structure, in the stark counter-light from the windows behind, and right beneath the crown of the pointed tunnel vault of the *Hansasaal*, a more diminutive group of three figures is situated.²⁹ Right above King David – who was, of course, the royal ancestor of Christ and His important Old Testament prefiguration – stands a crowned monarch clad in a swirling mantle, holding a scepter and a charter with pendent seal. This could be a conventional representation of the Holy Roman Emperor, or a more specific reference to Louis the Bavarian (r. 1314/1328–47), who reigned at the time of the presumable production of the *Hansasaal* sculptures. Meanwhile, the characters on his sides – the one with the stream of water running from a jar and the one with a model of a town gate – personify the two important privileges that Louis affirmed for the citizens of Cologne, respectively, the right to store and sell transit goods (*Stapelrecht*), and the right to erect military fortifications (*Befestigungsrecht*).³⁰ In this larger scheme, the Nine Worthies might have been given the role of symbolic intermediaries between the royal power and the oligarchic magistrate, as well as defenders, in a somewhat apotropaic sense, against any territorial encroachments on the part of the city's nominal lord, the archbishop of Cologne – exiled after the battle of Worringen in 1288. Placed within the thickness of the screen-wall, the Worthies support the sovereign and – perhaps more importantly for the aldermen – the lucrative privileges of the commune.³¹

Another explanation of the Worthies' surprising appearance in the *Hansasaal* is also context-bound, but this time the key to their meaning could be

until World War II. For a historical overview of Cologne's Jewish quarter, see Marianne Gechter, Sven Schütte, "Ursprung und Voraussetzungen des mittelalterlichen Rathaus und seiner Umgebung," in *Köln: Das gotische Rathaus* (see above, note 1), pp. 107–44.

29 The configuration, which belongs to the original solution of the southern wall of the *Hansasaal*, is an example of a triad group, "a form of composition that presents frontally an elevated, or larger, central figure and two lower or smaller flanking figures." See Rebecca Zorach, *The Passionate Triangle* (Chicago, 2011), p. 13. The corresponding sense of order and hierarchy, enforced by the Nine Worthies appearing at the base of the even larger triangular arrangement encompassing all of the 12 figures, is important for the visual rhetoric of this entire sculptural-architectural screen.

30 Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 399–400; Fried Mühlberg, "Der Hansasaal des Kölner Rathauses," p. 72, 88.

31 Three painted two-headed imperial eagles once adorned the vault of the hall, intensifying the symbolic statement of imperial allegiance. Their dating is contestable. See Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, p. 399; Fried Mühlberg, "Der Hansasaal des Kölner Rathauses," p. 80 and note 69.



FIGURE 6.4 King of Bohemia as One of the Prince-electors. C.1398. Mural fragment from the north wall of the Hansasaal, Cologne town hall. Tempera on plaster. Cologne, Walraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Nr.: Dep. 268 (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

offered by the murals, which once existed on the neighboring three walls (fig. 6.4). They survive only in fragments, datable on stylistic grounds to the latter third of the 14th century.³² Thankfully, important details of the original iconographic content of the program have come down in archival sources.³³ On the opposite, northern, wall from the Worthies the murals displayed a group of prophet-like figures in long robes and eye-catching headgear – identified more broadly as historic men of wisdom, or *auctoritates*. With all likelihood, eight shorter figures, inscribed into the niches of the painted altar-like structure (constituting the college of the imperial prince-electors and the Holy Roman Emperor) accompanied them. Each character originally held a sweeping banderole with a *titulus* devoted to the fair dispensation of justice and loyalty to the ideal of the empire's well-being.³⁴ Furthermore, the longitudinal walls of

-
- 32 Five fragments of the murals – four heads of the “prophets” and a shorter figure of the king of Bohemia, one of the prince-electors – have been preserved. The fragments were detached from the wall during restoration works in 1859, and are housed in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne (Inv. Nr.: Dep. 264-268). They are executed in a tempera technique, containing oil and animal glue in the binding medium, allowing for multilayered and nuanced bodily modeling. For a close examination of the *Hansasaal* murals, possible sources of their numerous inscriptions, dating issues, and proposed reconstruction, see Stephan Altensleben, “Politische Ethik im späten Mittelalter: Kurfürstenreime, Autoritätensprüche und Stadtreimentslehren im Kölner Rathaus,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 64 (2003), 125-85; Nicole Buchmann, “Die Malereifragmente aus dem Hansasaal,” in *Köln: Das gotische Rathaus* (see above, note 1), pp. 415-38; and a foundational study in two parts: Eduard Trier, “Die Prophetenfiguren des Kölner Rathauses,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 15 (1953), 79-102; Idem, “Die Prophetenfiguren des Kölner Rathauses (II). Ein Beitrag zur Profan-Ikonographie des Mittelalters,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 19 (1957), 193-224. Trier's primary focus is on the important group of eight oak-wood figures of “prophets,” or master scholars of the early days, created c.1414 and likewise originating from the Cologne town hall, now on loan to the Museum Schnütgen in the same city.
- 33 The group of sources is comprised of: *Cronica van der hilliger stat van Coellen (Koelhoffische Chronik, 1499)*, *Auctoritates infrascripte sunt scripte in domo consulatus civitatis Coloniensis* (from the miscellanea of legal and theological texts that belonged to the canon Franz Sluyn von Rheinbach, c.1500), a manuscript from the St. Pantaleon abbey in Cologne (c.1616), and a manuscript introduced to the discussion of the murals by Altensleben in 2003 (BnF, Cod. Lat. 5237, 294 v., first half of the 15th century). For the archival references and comments, see Stephan Altensleben, *Politische Ethik im späten Mittelalter*, pp. 132-36, notes 22, 23, 26, 31.
- 34 Among the surviving fragments, only the king of Bohemia's inscription can still be seen (others are preserved in documentary sources; see above, note 33): “You must consider the Empire's needs, both what is lost and what is gained” (“Ir suelt des ryches noet besinnen, wael up verlies ind up gewinnen”). Stephan Altensleben, *Politische Ethik im*

the hall were also adorned with murals representing a plentitude of esteemed teachers of the *vita activa* of the classical, biblical and Christian eras: prophets, philosophers, writers, poets, and rulers, all praising justice, good government, and civic unity with their Latin epigrams.³⁵

The inclusion of the Worthies in the semantic field saturated with moral and legal rhetoric, prompted scholars such as Robert L. Wyss to assign them the status of “court assistants,” or ideal judges, offering examples of correct behavior to the councilmen, and advocating the moral good on behalf of the town population.³⁶ The aldermen thus wished to approximate the elevated, noble stature of the Worthies through imitation and performative identification. They might have looked up to these charismatic “role models” much in the same way as to the image of Christ the Judge, prominently displayed in council chambers throughout the German territories and the Low Countries.³⁷

Despite the fact that the painted *auctoritates* accordingly frame the reading of the limestone Nine Worthies (reinforcing the “hybridity” of media and meanings in the town hall’s visual field), the murals most probably appeared in the hall decades after the sculptures had been in place there. Nevertheless, justice was indeed the greatest of knightly virtues, and its dispensation a central social event occurring in the town hall.³⁸ In his detailed study of the murals, Stephan Altensleben proposed that they could have been painted c.1398, that is to say, shortly after a political coup of 1396 ended the long rule of the old patrician families in Cologne, bringing to power the representatives of the craft guilds (*Gaffeln*). The number of the painted historic authorities combined with the older sculptures of the Nine Worthies (51 in total) corresponded, as Altensleben notes, to the 49 aldermen plus the two burgomasters of the recently reformed council.³⁹

späten Mittelalter, p. 131. Here and below the English translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

35 For instance, amid the 23 figures whose names and inscriptions have come down to us, were Moses, Isaiah, King Salomon, Aristotle, Cato, Horace, Emperor Trajan, and, curiously, the “reduplicated” Worthies – Alexander the Great, King David, and Charlemagne. Stephan Altensleben, *Politische Ethik im späten Mittelalter*, pp. 142-43.

36 Robert L. Wyss, *Die Neun Helden*, pp. 86-87.

37 On representations of the Last Judgment in town halls, see Georg Tröscher, “Weltgerichtsbilder in Rathhäusern und Gerichtsstätten,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 11 (1939), 139-214; Kristin Eldyss Sorensen Zapalac, *In His Image and Likeness. Political Iconography and Religious Change in Regensburg* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), pp. 26-54.

38 The judicial function of town halls is discussed in Stephan Albrecht, *Mittelalterliche Rathäuser* (see above, note 7), pp. 13-16.

39 Stephan Altensleben, *Politische Ethik im späten Mittelalter*, pp. 149-57, esp. pp. 152-54.

Accordingly, the sculptures of the Nine Worthies would have been appropriated and incorporated in a new iconographic collage that mainly consisted of a multitude of the revered men of the past professing the virtues of good government with inscriptions – an emphatic visual-rhetorical statement against the tyranny of the old regime and a celebration of the reinstated peace and prosperity.⁴⁰ Taking his seat under a given figure, a member of the council would have, or should have, personally identified with it and would be expected to emulate the righteous example.⁴¹ In a way, he would be set to act as a double, a disciple or a distant (spiritual) descendant of the portrayed authority. We may add that regardless of the murals' precise dating this general "substitutive" logic would be essentially valid.⁴²

This hypothesis, however, leaves behind the "original" function of the Nine Worthies sculptures in the *Hansasaal*, which, in fact, could have dealt even more directly with the concept of kinship. Before the transition of power in 1396, the town hall and the institution of the council belonged to an elite caste of the 15 wealthiest patrician families (*Geschlechter*) of Cologne, whose political authority, according to legend, had been established in Roman times by none other than the Emperor Trajan.⁴³ Hardly republican or democratic in the modern sense, the patricians strived to follow recognizable aristocratic ideals and forms of behavior to legitimate and cement their rule. According to Walter

40 Ibid., p. 171.

41 An analogous device of a direct correspondence between the number of the actual magistrates and the number of depicted historic authorities was employed in the carved oak-wood aldermen benches, formerly in the *Obere halle* of the Bremen town hall (1405-10). Originally forming a square, they respectively depicted prophets, philosophers, poets, and church teachers on their long sides, all named and holding banderoles with inscriptions. Unfortunately, the benches were almost completely destroyed in the Napoleonic wars, only their four short-side panels have been preserved (Focke Museum, Bremen, inv. 00294, 00295, 00296, 00297; they depict Charlemagne (*sic*), Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint Willehad), as have all of the former figures' *tituli*. Ibid., pp. 149-50; Stephan Albrecht, *Das Bremer Rathaus im Zeichen städtischer Selbstdarstellung vor dem 30-jährigen Krieg* (Marburg, 1993), pp. 49-50.

42 The program of the *Hansasaal* murals also included diminutive scenes and figures located in the trefoils and quatrefoils above each of the *auctoritates*. A number of these upper register scenes are known from pencil drawings executed in the mid-1860s and watercolor reconstructions from 1878. They could be interpreted as examples of negative behavior, contrasting with the righteous sayings of the wise men. Some of them are associated with the *topos* of the power of women: Aristotle and Phyllis, Virgil in a Basket, and episodes from the story of Samson. See Nicole Buchmann, *Die Malereifragmente aus dem Hansasaal*, pp. 416, 430-32.

43 Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 388-89. See also, pp. 146-52.

Geis, the old magistrates actually wished to incorporate the Nine Worthies (who stood at the pinnacle of a shared model of social hierarchy) into their own private genealogies, thus providing for the continuity and the smooth transmission of sovereignty.⁴⁴ The sculptures of the *Hansasaal* could thus be seen as a monument to the ambitions of the ruling elite to lay hold of a glorious past – in order to ensure a prosperous future. To cite a later example, this inherently aristocratic principle of constructing a spectacular, even if largely fictive, ancestral pedigree has seldom been exemplified with more splendor and bravura than in the cenotaph of the emperor Maximilian I in the Innsbruck *Hofkirche* (started in 1502, the work on the monument famously took many decades to complete). Incidentally, two of the Nine Worthies – King Arthur and Godfrey of Bouillon – stand here among the imposing bronze figures that represent the extended kinship of the Habsburgs.⁴⁵

As we can see, there are quite a number of approaches to justify the Worthies' occurrence in the town hall. Ideas of imperial loyalty and flattery, of court assistantship and judicial rhetoric, of invoking the accepted notions of good governance, of serving as identification models, or even imaginary forefathers, to the councilors of different social affiliations and commitments, come into play. All these interpretations, convincing in their own way, presuppose that a form of personal mimesis, a certain phenomenological and imaginative endeavor on the part of the town hall proprietors, was a strong motivation for welcoming the fabled Nine Worthies into the building. In the case of the Cologne sculptures, which – taking into account the aesthetic horizon of the period and the regional sculptural tradition – could be considered expressly lifelike, this procedure acquires an immediate, palpable sense. Put another way, the purported aim of their collective image was not only to signify or illustrate external entities and meanings for practical ends, but also to embody, receive, and reflect intentionality through charismatic presence, multiplied ninefold – to become the reference point, or the focus, of human expectations, wishes, anxieties, and hopes.⁴⁶

44 Ibid., pp. 400–03. Geis notes that the chronicler Gottfried Hagen, siding with the patricians in their struggle against the archbishops and guilds in his *Reimchronik* of Cologne (1270–80), has explicitly evoked Judas Maccabeus, one of the Nine Worthies, as a model for the patricians' own heroic exploits.

45 The likeness of Charlemagne, which would have completed the Christian triad of the Nine Worthies, was planned but never executed. Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008), p. 72.

46 This reading follows the broad theoretical agenda of such studies of the phenomenological, historical, and ideological issues governing human fascination with imagery as David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago,



FIGURE 6.5 Jan van Mansdale (Keldermans). Julius Caesar. 1384-85. Carved stone corbel, originally polychromed. Mechelen, Museum Schepenhuis, Stedelijke Musea Mechelen (PHOTO: JEAN-LUC ELIAS, © KIK-IRPA, BRUSSELS).

Keeping all this in mind, let us now turn to a rather different solution of employing images of the Nine Worthies in a town hall (fig. 6.5). The medium is once again sculptural, but in this case we will not encounter a spectacular stage-like framing screen with monumental figures. In fact, it might take some time to even notice the characters in question in the great hall of the 13th-century *Schepenhuis* (“House of the Councilmen,” the former town hall) of the Brabant city of Mechelen, an austere edifice standing on the edge of the medieval *Grote Markt*, close to the stately Saint Rumbold’s Cathedral. It is a series of 11 sculpted corbel stones, produced in 1384-85 by master carver Jan Van Mansdale, nicknamed Keldermans, from nearby Brussels.⁴⁷ Nine of the corbels

1989), W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* (Chicago, 2005), and Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Berlin, 2010).

47 Jean Squilbeck, “Les sculptures de l’ancienne Maison Echévinale de Malines,” *Revue belge d’archéologie et d’histoire de l’art* 5 (1935), 329-33; Domien Roggen, “Het beeldhouwwerk

represent the full membership of the Worthies, clad in heavy armor and brandishing heraldic shields, whereby the two remaining corbels are adorned with biblical scenes: the Drunkenness of Noah and the Sacrifice of Abraham.

Appropriately for this type of sculptural furnishing, offering very limited space, the individual Worthies are depicted in perceptibly uncomfortable, odd-looking poses – squeezed, crouching, or half-lying. As with the *Hansasaal* sculptures, they project different emotions, though with a tenser expressiveness. The combative thrust of King David or Joshua, for example, is met with the confident watchfulness of Judas Maccabeus, the halted head-on look of Godfrey, and Caesar's dynamically reclining posture, with torso and head half-turned, his enfolding cape forming a cavernous hideaway – a portrayal that simultaneously suggests circumspection and introspection. The Worthies are quite literally marginal figures in this hall, distributed as they are over its perimeter, lurking on the fringes in the somber light. Still, the corbels are positioned at mid-height of the wall, and in purely plastic terms (even if we take into account the many playful distortions in the armored knights' bodily proportions), the bas-reliefs are vigorous and muscular, executed in the vein of the Sluter-influenced Brabant sculpture.

As in the Cologne *Hansasaal*, the mighty Nine Worthies are made to look as if fulfilling a structural mission – carrying the bases of the ceiling beams. The predetermined spatial configuration of the beams prompted Keldermans to interpret the corbels as favorable vantage points for his characters, so that – as a group – they not only become objects of visual interest for the spectator, but also seem to project an encompassing reciprocal gaze – top down from every side of the hall.

Because the Mechelen corbel-stones have for a long time remained in relative obscurity in the art historical discourse, there have been no scholarly polemics as to the particular meaning and function in their given settings (fig. 6.6). Can we claim that those remarks which were brought forward in connection with the Cologne sculptures are likewise relevant in this case? The two Old Testament corbels shed an interesting light on this matter. It is worth taking note that from the typological-exegetical perspective, both are related to

van het Mechelsche Schepenhuis," *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis* 3 (1936), 86-103; Marie van der Vennet, "L'Ancienne maison échevinale de Malines," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 23 (1953), 3-32; Juliaan H.A. De Ridder, *Gerechtigheids-taferelen* (see above, note 10), pp. 14-19. Jan Van Mansdale, who gets his nickname from a brewery he owned in Brussels, is the founder of the Keldermans dynasty of architects, and his numerous descendants have received prestigious civic, church, and court commissions throughout the 15th and early 16th centuries. See J.H. Van Mosselveld, *Keldermans: een architectonisch netwerk in de Nederlanden* (The Hague, 1987).



FIGURE 6.6 Jan van Mansdale (Keldermans). The Sacrifice of Abraham. 1384-85. Carved stone corbel, originally polychromed. Mechelen, Museum Schepenhuis, Stedelijke Musea Mechelen (PHOTO: JEAN-LUC ELIAS, © KIK-IRPA, BRUSSELS).

the Passion cycle – the Drunkenness of Noah prefigures the Mocking of Christ, and the Sacrifice of Abraham His Crucifixion (fig. 6.6), pairings that have been often depicted in the *biblia pauperum* tradition.⁴⁸ Considering the judicial purpose of this space, the choice of biblical episodes does not look arbitrary at all: they afforded the Mechelen officials two memorable and provoking moral *exempla*, which represented a travesty of justice on the one hand, and a righteous fulfillment of God's will on the other, thematizing the responsibility of making the right choice when facing a complex dilemma.

Nevertheless, we can point to another aspect, which we may call temporal or chronological. The particular scenes from the Book of Genesis chosen for the corbels are foundational for the Christian understanding of history, marking pivotal events after the Deluge. Interestingly enough, the Old Testament corbels are located exactly between the pagan (*ante legem*) and Jewish (*sub lege*) triads of the Nine Worthies, so that the patriarchs Noah and Abraham – the protagonists of the biblical scenes – are logically followed by the Jewish

48 Cf. Engelbert Kirschbaum, ed., *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome, 1972; offprint, Rome, 2004), 4, p. 619; Idem., 1, pp. 29-30.

heroes Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus. The canonical tripartite sequence and temporal consistency of the Nine Worthies *topos* here remain intact, despite the apparent intervention of the biblical scenes – but now, the linear narrative dynamic comes to the fore.

In the Mechelen *Schepenhuis*, we again witness how the Nine Worthies affirm their fabled reputations, not only as defenders of justice, but as temporal “signposts,” or relays, in the historical imaginary of the late Middle Ages – providentially drawing a common trajectory through the vastness of time, collapsing the past into the present, and welcoming fantasies of lineage. Working in a sculptural idiom that strived for the singularity of forms and the incitement of emotional participation, Keldermans succeeded in ingeniously imparting to his Nine Worthies not only a sense of presence, but historic authenticity, so that in spite of their size and limited visibility, they would still convincingly epitomize charismatic leadership.

Evidently, the magistrates of Mechelen wished to have the Nine Worthies close by for the same reasons as their associates in Cologne (situated less than 200 km away), putting to good use their seemingly restrained budget for the project. These reasons, in our opinion, were not exclusively defined by any given function of the figured corbel stones, judicial or political, but would have had more to do with the interplay of various meanings, reflecting the aldermen’s own conflicting thoughts. Hermeneutic impulses could be challenged by the sheer fascination with the Nine Worthies – mythic heroes, though no less real for that matter.

Our third case study takes us to the Hanseatic town of Lüneburg in Northern Germany – a commune formally dependent on territorial lords, the Welf dukes of Saxony, but in the later Middle Ages effectively autonomous in its policies and trade. The ducal castle on a prominent hill with a gypsum quarry, the Kalkberg, which overlooks the town from the west, was destroyed in 1371 during the so-called Wars of the Lüneburg succession, never to be rebuilt.⁴⁹ The city enjoyed prosperous times thanks to its extensive natural repositories of salt, and for this reason, its council chiefly consisted of wealthy merchants involved in the salt industry.⁵⁰

The Lüneburg town hall complex is one of the best preserved monuments of medieval and early modern civic architecture in Germany, with a good share

49 Eckhard Michael, “Die Blütezeit Lüneburgs und ihre Grundlagen,” in *Das Lüneburger Ratssilber*, Bestandskatalog des Kunstgewerbemuseums 16, ed. Stefan Bursche (Berlin, 1990), pp. 49–57.

50 Klaus Alpers, *Patriziat in Lüneburg*, *ibid.*, pp. 58–63.

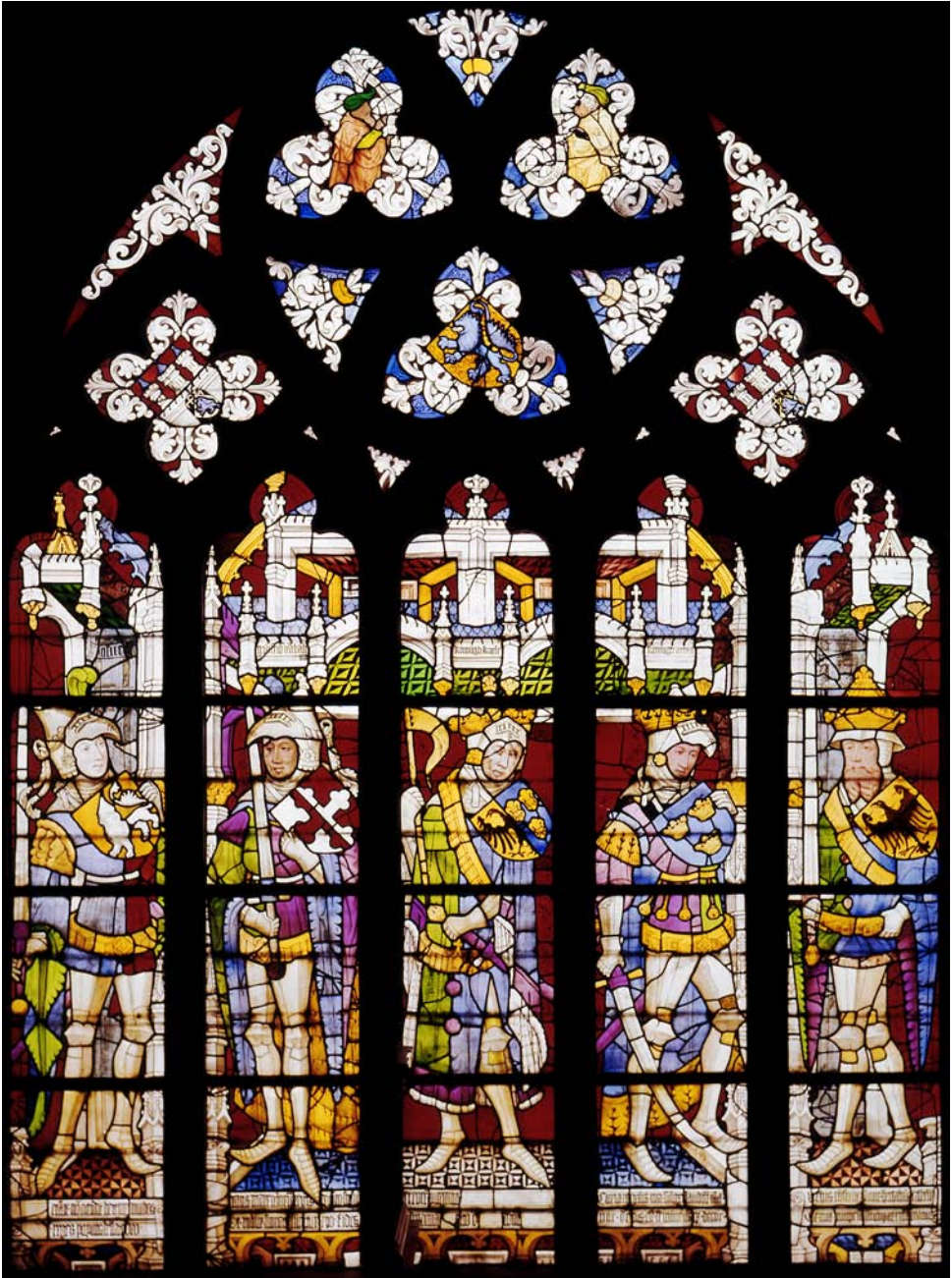


FIGURE 6.7 Joshua, Godfrey of Bouillon, Charlemagne, King Arthur, and Julius Caesar. C.1410. Central stained-glass window of the south wall of the Gerichtslaube, Lüneburg town hall (PHOTO: RÜDIGER BECKSMANN, CORPUS VITREARUM DEUTSCHLAND, FREIBURG IM BREISGAU).

of its original furnishings and imagery intact.⁵¹ In contrast to the unostentatious series of corbel-stone reliefs in the Mechelen *Schepenhuis*, we are faced here with a magnificent showpiece featuring the Nine Worthies.⁵² Three large pointed-shaped stained-glass windows – with five figures on the wider central one, and the others paired on the sides – adorn the southern wall of the oldest hall of the *Rathaus*, the so-called *Gerichtslaube*, originally *novum consistorium* (fig. 6.7). A record of payment in the sum of 10 marks made in 1434 to an anonymous glass painter for unspecified work on the windows – conveniently, and tellingly, designates the space as *unser heren sale*, “our lords’ hall.”⁵³ Created c.1410, these windows are indeed remarkable: they represent the only known treatment of the Nine Worthies theme in the medium, and the only monumental secular stained-glass cycle of the medieval period still *in situ*.⁵⁴

As with our previous examples, the persuasive intent of the Nine Worthies images in the *Gerichtslaube* lies in generating a feeling of presence; though, given the specific possibilities provided by stained glass, this time it is a presence of a distanced, elevated, even numinous nature. The corporeal and mimetic qualities of limestone statuary are substituted here for ethereal semi-transparency of the surface, clearly bringing to mind an association with a prestigious class of church imagery. The flash of brilliant colored light in the focal area of the hall produces a sensation of a quasi-sacred epiphany, a powerful *apparitio regis*. The skillful technique of combining colored and grisaille glass pieces, as well as the subtle and differentiated application of contours and modeling,⁵⁵ prompt the effect of partial dematerialization and enhance the images’ aura of magnificence.⁵⁶

51 For a concise architectural history of the town hall, a large conglomerate of buildings dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries, see Stephan Albrecht, *Mittelalterliche Rathäuser* (see above, note 7), pp. 100–03.

52 Rüdiger Becksmann, “Lüneburg, Rathaus,” in *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien in Lüneburg und den Heideklöstern*, *Corpus vitrearum medii aevi Deutschland VII*, 2, eds. Rüdiger Becksmann and Ulf-Dietrich Korn (Berlin, 1992), pp. 80–130; Madeline H. Caviness, “The Law (En)acted: Performative Space in the Town Hall of Lüneburg,” in *Glas. Malerei. Forschung. Internationale Studien zu Ehren von Rüdiger Becksmann*, eds. Hartmut Scholz, Ivo Rauch, and Daniel Hess (Berlin, 2004), pp. 181–90.

53 Rüdiger Becksmann, *Lüneburg, Rathaus*, p. 82.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96.

56 That the concept of magnificence, usually associated with princely milieux, was indeed of central concern to the magistrates is borne out by the tradition of the ceremonial display of the city councils’ collections of silverware. Remarkably, it is the *Ratssilber* of Lüneburg that is the best preserved group of such objects with more than 30 pieces dating to the 15th–early 17th centuries, conserved at the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Berlin. Stefan

Incidentally, the benches of the 24 council members were located right next to these windows (the corresponding segment of the floor, which largely preserves its original tiling, was actually equipped with a warm-air-heating system – *pipenoven*).⁵⁷ Bearing in mind that one arrived in the hall from the opposite, northern end, the city fathers clearly sought to appear enshrouded by the luminescent, shimmering vision of the nine heroes.

Apart from the customary heraldic shields, the Worthies can be identified by means of inscriptions in two languages. Their names conveyed in German vernacular above their heads, while Latin distychs on pictorial plinths at the feet of the figures adduce brief descriptions of their deeds and victories. Whereas three of the distychs have been fully or partially lost, or ended up jumbled up after the windows' restoration in 1853, others remain more or less readable. Textual messages in Latin likewise appear in the banderoles of the diminutive figures of the prophets, or historic authorities, accompanying the main group of the Nine Worthies in the manner of the *auctoritates* that we have mentioned in our discussion of the *Hansasaal* of the Cologne town hall.⁵⁸ Positioned above the Nine Worthies (in the two sections of the crowning rose of the central window, and the quatrefoils of the side windows), clad in scholarly robes and caps, their half-figures are supplemented by the coats of arms of the town and the dukedom. Moreover, these exemplary teachers and the armorials multiply in the stained-glass windows of the adjacent eastern wall of the hall. Providing the Nine Worthies with a rhetorical framework of moral admonishment, the wise dictums (credited in some cases to named figures like Cicero and Seneca, and quoting in others from the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah) emphasize the judicial and civic virtues of the heroes.⁵⁹

Bursche, ed., *Das Lüneburger Ratssilber* (see above, note 49; reworked new edition, Berlin, 2008). On magnificence as a princely virtue, see Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance. Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 48-58.

57 Stephan Albrecht, *Mittelalterliche Rathäuser*, p. 101.

58 All inscriptions are cited, with modern German translations, by Rüdiger Becksmann, *Lüneburg, Rathaus*, pp. 99-117.

59 To give an idea of the language and content of the wise men's sayings, it is worthwhile to quote a number of them (with loose translations based on Becksmann's citations): "Isaiah. Wisdom and knowledge are treasures of Salvation." (*Isaias · consilium · et · sapiencia · diviciae · sunt · salutis ·*). Ibid., p. 99, 2a; "We're not born for ourselves only, but for the others too [Cato or Plato]" (*non · nob(is) · solu(m) · nati · sumus · sed · ...ie · eciam · et · a(teris) · ...o*). Ibid., p. 100, 2c. "Those who take the office of a judge must give up on friendship. Tullius" (*Deponat · p(er)sona(m) · amici · q(ui) · induit · p(er)sona(m) · iudicis · Tullius ·*). Ibid., p. 104, 2a.

Reinforcing the situation of a personal engagement with pictorial reality, the distychs below the Nine Worthies make each protagonist address the viewer directly in the first person singular.⁶⁰ Godfrey of Bouillon, for example, proclaims about his feats as the leader of the First Crusade: “I defended the sepulcher of the Lord of Heavens across the sea, so that the faith would attain lasting strength.”⁶¹ King Arthur adds his own lines: “My royal court glistens with eulogies, now it is the honor and adornment of women,”⁶² and so complements the triumphs on the exotic battlefield with the celebration of courtly sexuality. In contrast to other inscriptions, an immediate reference to the local *memoria* and civic identity is provided by Julius Caesar: “I have erected the town of the moon, an imposing fortress, and single-handedly slashed Pompey with a sword.”⁶³ The first part of the phrase is an invocation of the founding myth of Lüneburg: it was believed that Caesar had a statue of the goddess Luna put on the Kalkberg, and the town would grow around the shrine.⁶⁴ In this way, the widely held reverence for the Nine Worthies had a very particular local resonance for the civic government of Lüneburg.

Noticeably, the respective positions of the three triads of the Nine Worthies pictured in the *Gerichtslaube* were subject to simple yet effective manipulation, so that the Christian emperor Charlemagne, here beardless, was given “center stage,” with Godfrey and Arthur flanking him. We could read this compositional gesture as an expression of allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor; after all, at the time Charlemagne was considered a mythic, saintly hero, a Christian potentate *par excellence*.⁶⁵ While the presence of the coats of arms of the Saxon dukes – the intermediaries between the commune and the *Kaiser* – assures the necessary hierarchical decorum, the shifting of the Frankish leader

60 As noted above, this mode of address was also used in the Worthies' inscriptions in the La Manta frescoes.

61 Ibid., p. 109, 1-4b: *trans · mare celoru(m) regis arceo (?) · sepulcru(m) · / Ut · robur · sumat · iugitur · ego · fides ·*

62 Ibid., p. 112, 1-4d: *Curia · regalis · mea · fulget laudib(us) · illa · / nu(n)c · decus · est · femineusque · decor ·*

63 Ibid., pp. 112-14, 1-4e: *urbis · co(n)struxi · lune · spectabile · castru(m) / Et · mea · pompeium · sincopat · ense · manus*

64 Ibid., pp. 112-14, and note 100. For a study of the legend, and the marble column (preserved in the Museum Lüneburg) that allegedly belonged to the Luna shrine, see Klaus Alpers, “Die Luna-Säule auf dem Kalkberge. Alter, Herkunft und Wirkung einer Lüneburger Tradition,” *Lüneburger Blätter* 25/26 (1982), 87-121.

65 On Charlemagne's posthumous reputation, see Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey, eds., *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages. Power, Faith, and Crusade* (New York, 2008).



FIGURE 6.8
Cord Lange, Burgomaster of
Lüneburg, c.1491. *One of the
four figures depicted on the
stained-glass window of the
Bürgermeister-Körkammer,
Lüneburg town hall* (PHOTO:
CORPUS VITREARUM
DEUTSCHLAND, FREIBURG IM
BREISGAU).

to the dominant position in the Nine Worthies group could be an allusive affirmation of the town's *de facto* direct subordination to the German king and emperor, and the eschewal of the expelled dukes' political proxy.

However, the strong psychological motivation for picturing the Nine Worthies in the Lüneburg town hall (just as in town halls elsewhere) manifests itself in another image, found in the room immediately adjoining the *Gerichtslaube* to the west: the so-called *Bürgermeister-Körkammer*. The chamber, sequestered from the main hall not with one door, but with three of them, warranted security because it was reserved for the election of burgomasters and private council, as well as for custody of municipal accounts and contracts. About 80 years after the Nine Worthies windows had been installed in the *Gerichtslaube*, the four-sectioned window of the southern wall of the burgomasters' chamber was also adorned with stained glass (fig. 6.8).⁶⁶

Its subject is a group of four figures standing upright beside each other, with heraldic shields underneath, and hovering banderoles with inscriptions professing ethical maxims. These men, appropriately dressed in long fur-lined mantels and leather shoes in clogs, are the four burgomasters of Lüneburg who were in office in the 1490-91 term. Personal armorials serve to identify their names: Dietmar Sanckenstede (*Ratsherr*, or councilman, since 1482, burgomaster since 1487), Cord Lange (councilman since 1474, burgomaster since 1486) (fig. 6.8), Nikolaus Sanckenstede (councilman since 1458, burgomaster since 1467), and Jakob Schomaker (councilman since 1479, burgomaster since 1491).⁶⁷ The robes of all except Lange are red, while the latter is donned in black

66 For the description of the *Bürgermeister-Körkammer*, as well as technical and iconographic analysis of its stained-glass window, see Rüdiger Becksmann, *Lüneburg, Rathaus*, pp. 119-23. Becksmann dates the stained glass to 1491 and connects it with the workshop of the glazier Gerd Wulff (Ibid., p. 121).

67 Ibid., p. 120, and note 117. The inscriptions are as follows: Dietmar Sanckenstede: "Your responsibility is to think wisely, not try to envision; God, however, is able to look and foresee the things to come." (*Istud · est · sapere · non est · videre · sed de(us) · [non] modo · [pot]est · videre · sed · eciam · futu[rum] praescire*). Ibid., p. 122, 1a; – Cord Lange: "Every wrong-doing can easily be eradicated at the outset, but it mostly grows strong when punished." (*Omne · malum enascens · facile · opprimitur · mulctatu(m) · pleru(m) · que fit · robustius*). Ibid., pp. 122-23, 1b; – Nikolaus Sanckenstede: "The foundation of an enduring community and a good name is always justice, without it nothing can be praiseworthy." (*Fundame(n)tum · enim · est · perpetue com(un)ionis et · fame iusticia sine · qua · nichel potest · esse · laudabile*). Ibid., pp. 123, 1c; – Jakob Schomaker: *Sui · adipisci · vera(m) · iusticie · gloriam ... officii*. Ibid., p. 123, 1d. Becksmann points out that due to a preservation flaw, the inscription has not been satisfactorily translated yet, though he quotes an attempt made by W. Reinecke, finding it "little convincing." Ibid., p. 123, note 129.

and holds a scroll: attributes distinguishing him as the ruling burgomaster of 1490.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the losses (among the faces of the four figures, for instance, only that of Lange is original, and interestingly, it betrays individualized portrait features), these stained-glass likenesses must be considered important precursors of the tradition of civic group portraiture, as well as individual burgomaster portraits hung in town hall galleries in later periods. What is interesting in our context is that the burgomasters' depictions in the *Körkammer* directly evoke the neighboring Nine Worthies: in the choice of expensive, opulent medium, in the full-figure composition and hieratic postures, in the authority-exuding accompanying inscriptions, and key iconographic attributes such as their coats of arms. Both the Nine Worthies and the burgomasters' windows are positioned at the south side of the town hall in sheer spatial proximity, a fact that accentuates their symbolic symmetry. Furthermore, seen from the street at the time when the interiors would be candlelit, these stained-glass windows must have produced a spectacular unified vision.

That being said, the window of the *Körkammer* commemorated, celebrated, and, as it were, eternalized real individuals who had the power and financial resources to produce the prestigious work. In this "staff only" room, kept under lock and key for most visitors to the town hall, the idea of personal mimesis is foregrounded in a bold visual stratagem. It bears witness to the transformative power of the Nine Worthies and their compelling, optically exciting representation. In an ambitious drive for imitation, the four city leaders went as far as to acquire a pictorial – and aesthetic – dimension themselves. "Charisma stimulates imitation," as Jaeger reminds us, "the greater model remakes the lesser in its own image; the devotee's desire activates the chemistry of higher reformation."⁶⁹

In conclusion, it should be noted that the 16th century has not lost interest in the Nine Worthies – as attested, for instance, by the impressive and influential series of prints by Hans Burgkmair of Augsburg (1516-19), Lucas van Leyden (1518-22), and later Virgil Solis of Nuremberg (1530-62).⁷⁰ But with the advent of

68 The words *Omissee...est* ("... to be left out ...") can be seen on the scroll. Becksmann indicates that the officials are placed on the heraldic right and left relative to the ruling burgomaster in accordance with the seniority principle, based on the length of each one's continuous service. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

69 C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 137.

70 Complete sets are preserved, respectively, at the Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden (Inv. A 2027-2032, series includes the Nine Female Worthies); Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Inv. RP-P-BI-6236M, J, O); The British Museum, London (Inv. 1868, 0822.283-291, the museum also holds assorted sheets by Solis forming the complete series of the Female Worthies).



FIGURE 6.9 *Albert von Soest. King Darius flanked by Temperance and Patience. 1564-84. Right pillar of the main portal, Grosse Ratsstube, Lüneburg town hall (PHOTO: NIEDER-SÄCHSISCHES LANDESAMT FÜR DENKMALPFLEGE, FOTOSAMMLUNG).*

both the Northern humanism and Protestantism, the overall system of communal iconography has experienced a perceptible shift – learned motifs and subjects were multiplied, but, as Stephan Albrecht argues, quite often they were in fact transferred from didactic handbooks on princely government and grouped without apparent reference to the specifically civic, or “republican,” and local concerns.⁷¹ By contrast, precisely such concerns and individual aspirations were central to the magistrates in search of legitimate identity who commissioned and looked at the 14th- to 15th-century images that we have discussed.

One of the most ingenious examples of civic artwork commissioned by magistrates in the 16th century also features the Nine Worthies, and we do not need to leave the town hall of Lüneburg to find it. The familiar characters can be seen on the two rotating figural pillars of oak-wood forming part of the main portal of the Large Council Chamber of the *Rathaus* (fig. 6.9). The masterly carved wooden decoration of this entire room, including these pillars, was carried out by the local sculptor Albert von Soest in the 1560s-1580s.⁷² The Worthies are positioned in niches, surrounded by the female personifications of the virtues and dense grotesque ornamentation. On closer inspection, however, one notices that Joshua and Charlemagne happened to be replaced by the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius (named by inscriptions) – historic figures of rather notorious standing in the classical tradition (fig. 6.9). Meanwhile, their coats of arms seem to belong to the original proprietors. Could it be that this confusion signals a gradual disenchantment with the singularity of the Nine Worthies, the “dissipation” of their charisma – a different, or more accurately, indifferent, attitude?

This was certainly the case in early modern Cologne, where the names of the heroes depicted in the *Hansasaal* would be forgotten for generations (fig. 6.10).⁷³ Until the middle of the 19th century, the only concerned opinion was that the warrior figures stood for the representatives of the member-cities of the Hanseatic League. A sentimental scene painted by the artist Georg Osterwald in 1846 – set in the sunny Gothic hall with nine colorful sculptures, sometime in a distant medieval past – finally signals a renewed appeal of this space and its adornments, albeit a nostalgic one.⁷⁴

71 Stephan Albrecht, “Rathaus” (see above, note 10), pp. 277-78.

72 Hans Wentzel, *Die Lüneburger Ratsstube von Albert von Soest* (Hamburg, 1947); Maike G. Haupt, *Die Große Ratsstube im Lüneburger Rathaus (1564-1584). Selbstdarstellung einer protestantischen Obrigkeit* (Marburg, 2000).

73 Walter Geis, *Die Neun Guten Helden*, pp. 404, 406. The figures were correctly identified as representing the Nine Worthies in 1858, on the eve of the *Hansasaal*'s extensive restoration.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 404.



FIGURE 6.10 *Georg Osterwald. The Hansasaal of the Cologne town hall. 1846. Oil on canvas. Potsdam, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Inv. Nr. GK I 7782 (PHOTO: ROLAND HANDRICK, STIFTUNG PREUSSISCHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN BERLIN-BRANDENBURG).*

Returning to our initial question: why were the Nine Worthies so beloved by the Northern European town authorities in the later Middle Ages? After all, we should take into account that the allegedly perfect knights were not regarded as blameless by everyone: their reputations invited skepticism or even irony. Already in the 1320s, Jan Van Boendale – a town clerk in Antwerp – complained that it would have been more appropriate if Octavian had taken place among the three best pagans, as he was obviously “better” than his uncle Julius Caesar.⁷⁵ Moreover, powerful heroes and rulers have commonly been associated with vainglory, as well as the transitory nature of earthly sovereignty. Apparently, these controversies only helped to enroot the concept of the Nine Worthies deeper in the collective imagination of the Late Middle Ages – made their aristocratic gloss even more fascinating, and so more susceptible to exploitation in political propaganda.

If we think which of Max Weber’s three forms of legitimate rule were available to the German and Netherlandish civic governments of the age, we would undoubtedly detect features of both the legal and the traditional authority in their oligarchic regimes.⁷⁶ What it seems the communal officials consciously lacked was personal charismatic authority – and they wished to attain it with the help of pictorial rhetoric and agency, not least of all by appealing to the cultural ideal of the nine exemplary heroes of times past, a hauntingly sublime image borrowed from a higher social milieu. They strived towards it, however intricately this had to be rationalized and morally justified along the way.

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75 Van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer*, pp. 38-39.

76 Max Weber, “Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft,” *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (MWG), I, 22-24, pp. 726-42.

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PART 3

*Dazzling Reflections: Charismatic Art and
Its Audience*



Charisma and the Ideal Viewer in Nicetas Choniates's *De signis*

Paroma Chatterjee

Some time after the momentous events of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, a Byzantine historian set himself to write an account of his land.¹ The *Historia* is the most important eyewitness report in Greek of the mayhem wreaked by the Crusaders on Constantinople. Nicetas Choniates – courtier, rhetorician, and chronicler – was outraged that the Latins had sacked his city and the Byzantine empire instead of directing their ire toward the Saracens occupying the Holy Land as they should have done. The attack on Byzantium was as unexpected as it was violent, and the ensuing bitterness on the part of the Orthodox Greeks against the Latins is well captured in the *Historia*. Although parts of the chronicle serve as a devastating critique of the state of Byzantium itself, particularly under some of the more colorful characters of the ruling house of Komnenos,² the work culminates in a savage denunciation of the Crusaders, made all the more damning by Choniates's brilliant rhetoric. Indeed, the entire *Historia*, as Anthony Kaldellis has shown, is a virtuoso piece of writing, strewn with grammatical reversals and rhetorical paradoxes.³ This is utterly appropriate on the part of an author who was profoundly disturbed by the unnatural reversals of recent history in which Christians (Catholics) could turn on their fellow (Orthodox) Christians for mercenary gain. Rhetorical form, in this case, reinforces content with a dramatic force.

1 Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984). All passages discussed in this essay are drawn from Magoulias's translation and referred to as *Historia* followed by the appropriate number marking the passage and the page on which it occurs. These numbers correspond to the definitive edition of the *Historia* by J.A. Van Dielen (Berlin, 1975). For an analysis of the manuscript tradition of the *Historia*, see Alicia J. Simpson, "Before and after 1204: The Versions of Niketas Choniates's *Historia*," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006), 189–221.

2 Anthony Kaldellis, "Paradox, Reversal and the Meaning of History," *Niketas Choniates. A Historian and a Writer*, eds. Alicia Simpson and Stephanos Efthymiadis (Geneva, 2009), pp. 77–101.

3 Kaldellis, "Paradox, Reversal and the Meaning of History," pp. 77–101.

But it is in the coda to the *Historia*, known to scholars as the *De signis*,⁴ that Choniates deploys the trope of reversal to particularly interesting effects, thereby disclosing his conception of the city of Constantinople as a charged, charismatic space undone by the marauding Latins. If the medieval conception of charisma comprises the sense of “authority granted by remarkable moral and spiritual gifts,”⁵ then Constantinople was certainly deserving of that epithet. For one, it was a veritable treasure-trove of some of the most precious relics of Christendom such as the pieces of the True Cross, the nails with which Christ was pinned, the lance with which he was pierced, and even drops of the Holy Blood, among others, which were housed in the imperial chapel of the Pharos and in numerous other churches and shrines throughout the city.⁶ This cache of relics alone bestowed a tremendous charisma on the spaces within which they resided. But no less significant were the icons – some of them of miraculous manufacture and/or capable of working miracles of their own – that invested Constantinople, and Byzantium, with the aura of an enviable prestige and grace. Hans Belting went so far as to argue that Byzantine icons were regarded as relics in medieval Italy; hence the well-remarked similarities between Italian *duecento* painting and Byzantine art.⁷ Furthermore, the accounts of pilgrims, diplomats, and tourists to the city over centuries describe it as a wondrous, surpassingly beautiful, and awe-inspiring place, redolent with charisma. Indeed, a leitmotif of the crusading chronicles themselves is that of wonder at the rich and mighty city the soldiers had successfully laid

4 For studies on the *De signis*, see Anthony Cutler, “The *De signis* of Nicetas Choniates. A Reappraisal,” *American Journal of Archaeology* (April, 1968), 113-18; E. Mathiopoloulou-Tomaritou, “Klassisches und Klassizistisches Statuenfragment von Niketas Choniates,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 73 (1980), 25-40; Titos Papamastorakis, “Interpreting the *De signis* of Niketas Choniates,” in *Niketas Choniates. A Historian and a Writer*, eds. Alicia Simpson and Stephanos Efthymiadis (Geneva, 2009), pp. 209-24; and Paroma Chatterjee, “Sculpted Eloquence and Niketas Choniates’s *De signis*,” *Word & Image* 27, no. 4 (2011), 396-406.

5 Paul Binski, “Reflections on the ‘Wonderful Height and Size’ of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime,” in *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), p. 130.

6 See Holger A. Klein, “Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople,” *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. F.A. Bauer, *BYZAS* 5 (2006), 79-99; and George Majeska, “Russian Pilgrims in Constantinople,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), 93-108.

7 Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. M. Bartusis and R. Meyer (New Rochelle, 1990), p. 216. A compelling critique of Belting’s argument may be found in Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy. Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (New York, 1996).

siege to, so much so that "brave as they might be, every man shivered at the sight."⁸

The quality of charisma features no less prominently in Choniates's *De signis* where it is deployed, interestingly, as an essential component *not* of Byzantine relics and icons, but of pagan and pre-Christian statues. The account is almost exclusively devoted to the descriptions of these images which graced the public spaces of Constantinople, and which were brutally destroyed or mutilated by the Crusaders. Herakles, Helen of Troy, and various birds and beasts appear in all their glory, only to be razed to the ground by the invaders. The descriptions are breathtakingly evocative, framed as they are in the rhetorical mode of ekphrasis. Ancient rhetorical handbooks such as the *Progymnasmata* define an ekphrasis as the description of an event, a place, a period, an image, or a person which brings the subject (the event, place, image, and so forth) vividly before the eyes of the listener or reader.⁹ A successful ekphrasis engaged the recipient not simply as one receiving a text (whether in oral or written form), but also as a participant in the unfolding narrative. The peculiar power of ekphrasis to render verbal descriptions graphically alive often led to the deliberate overstepping of the boundaries separating art and nature, such that a statue or an object was presented as being the 'real' thing. This sort of reversal is entirely natural to an ekphrastic description – and as we shall see, Herakles, Helen, and others are invested with similarly uncanny life-like qualities in the *De signis*. In such a capacity, then, ekphrasis assumed the mantle of a verbal competitor of reality and of the visual arts, striving to capture the vividness of the latter through words. Ekphrasis was a staple of Byzantine rhetorical training and amply evident in various other literary genres as well. Hence, it is no surprise that one as skilled in the art of rhetoric as Choniates should wield it in a work so heavily dominated by the theme of reversals.

8 Geoffrey de Villehardouin, "The Conquest of Constantinople," in *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades* (New York, repr., 1985), p. 128. See also the essays by Ruth Macrides, "Constantinople: The Crusaders' Gaze," pp. 193–212, and Albrecht Berger, "Sightseeing in Constantinople: Arab Travelers, c. 900–1300," pp. 179–91; *Travel in the Byzantine World. Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Aldershot, 2002).

9 The literature on ekphrasis is vast. A few recent works on Byzantine ekphrasis are Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Burlington, VT, 2009); Webb, "Accomplishing the Picture: Ekphrasis, Mimesis, and Martyrdom in Asterios of Amaseia," *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 13–32; and Paroma Chatterjee, "Viewing and Description in *Hysmine and Hysminias*: The Fresco of the Virtues," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 67 (2013), 209–25.

And in doing so, he imputes a specific charisma to the statues he mentions. For if the quality of charisma resides in the weakening of distinctions between life and art, as C. Stephen Jaeger has argued, then Choniates's ekphrastic effusions endow the statues with precisely that quality. No mere confections of bronze or stone, they seem at times to depict Herakles himself, cloaked in his lion skin, and Helen herself, lips invitingly parted, "anointed with the moistness of erotic love."¹⁰ In discussing this dimension of charisma, Jaeger cites Charles Sanders Peirce who observed that, "In contemplating a painting, there is a moment when we lose consciousness that it is not the real thing; the distinction of the real and the copy vanishes ..."¹¹ Choniates's ekphrases serve – or at least attempt – to blur the distinctions between the real and the represented.

But even more than their seeming life-likeness, some of the statues actively strive to cast a protective aura over the city. Just so does the magnificent sculpture of an eagle triumphing over a snake ward off poisonous reptiles and snake bites from Constantinople. Beguiling forms *and* apotropaic functions, thus, work together in some of these statues to make their effects felt in tangible ways as powerfully charismatic objects in the cityscape. Furthermore, as we shall see, Choniates takes care to outline the ancient lineage of these images, mentioning their manufacturers (Apollonios of Tyana, in one case) or their depictions of events from antiquity. Their great age is construed as part of their intrinsic charisma; the Latins' assault on them, as the unfortunate stemming of their centuries-long existence.

This essay argues that by investing Constantinople's ancient statues with a charismatic aura and a historical resonance, Choniates frames his text as a polemic in which the Latins are posited as being unsusceptible to charisma and, *therefore*, deprived of historical consciousness. The inability, or refusal, to submit to the demands of charisma results in the disruption of historical continuity, as the Latins did by invading Byzantium. (Sometimes, though, one wonders whether Choniates protests too much; in at least one instance, as will be shown later in this essay, he seems to credit the Latins with an awareness – even if a dim one – of a particular statue's charismatic potential, and their destruction of the piece seems to be calculated to neutralize its dangerous power.) The appreciation of charisma here is tightly interwoven with an ideal model of viewership which, in turn, is construed as having its foundations in a classical education (*paideia*). Choniates implicitly prescribes a model of

¹⁰ Choniates, *Historia*, 652. p. 360.

¹¹ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 31.

viewing which entails knowledge of ancient rhetoric and history; without this training, the full force of charisma upon the viewer is lost. The Latins are continually presented as a people devoid of such knowledge. Their ignorance of the traditions of the Romans allows them to desecrate Romania with no compunction. In addition, their absolute imperviousness to the charisma of images spurs them on to acts of total destruction. Choniates laments that while

in olden times, the victors in battle were motivated by fellow feeling and chose not to nurse hatreds forever; hence, they erected trophies of wood and small stones that would stand but a short while and then crumble, for they were memorials ... Nowadays, as evidence of their victories, the barbarians ... have invented the razing of cities and total ruin.¹²

The creation of images, it is implied, is an important step toward cultivating an appreciation of them and of nurturing a sense of humanity, one that does not “nurse hatreds forever.”¹³ Viewing these small trophies while they stand, further leads to the cultivation of memory, a sense of the past, and knowledge of the contingency of victory. But instead of engaging in the creative act of erecting victory memorials (and all that it entails in terms of memory, historical consciousness, and the cultivation of fellow feeling for one's enemies), the Latins instead rampage over the city and reduce it to rubble.

Yet another reason why the Latins remain unmoved by charisma is their love of money.¹⁴ Choniates misses no opportunity of castigating them as a people fatally attracted by base currency, willing to sell off their own wives for the sake of it. Coin is pitted against charisma as its very opposite. Where the latter is rooted in the Greek term *charis*, or grace, a quantity without measure and difficult to obtain, believed to animate sacred relics, icons, and even human beings such that they manifest the presence of the divine, coin is measurable, easily copied, and capable of being circulated in inferior imitations. More importantly, where *charis* has the additional meaning of “gratitude” and “a favor bestowed,”¹⁵ thus entailing a reciprocal relationship between the giver of charisma and its recipient who is thus favored in exchange for a vow or a prayer, coin, in Choniates's chronicle, never enters into an honorable exchange. The Latins duly pilfer all the gold and silver they can lay their hands on, “consider-

12 Choniates, *Historia*, 635, pp. 347-48.

13 Choniates, *Historia*, 635, p. 347.

14 See the observations in Chatterjee, “Sculpted Eloquence,” pp. 397-99.

15 See the entry for *charis* and *charisma* in Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, imp. 2003), pp. 882-83.

ing themselves to be guiltless ... since they were only receiving what was owed them ..."¹⁶ Indeed, coin is not exchanged for a quantity that is equal (or even inferior) to it in value at all; rather, it is brutally wrested from the city's treasures and statuary by the marauders who give nothing back in return, not even the victory memorials of wood and stone mentioned above. Furthermore, coin is obtained in these circumstances through the very acts of complete destruction that mark the Latins out as barbarians for it is through the dissolution of bronze statuary that currency is minted. By melting the statues, the Latins transform the mighty, the unique, and the whole into the small, the fragmented, and the reproducible. Their love of gold, along with their ignorance of the classical tradition, cuts them off from the effects of charisma and causes them to staunch the course of an ancient civilization.

In what follows, I shall perform a close reading of the *De signis* in order to disclose the ways in which Choniates weaves his polemic around the pivotal subject of charisma. Apart from examining the specific components of charismatic images as presented in the text, I will focus on two extended passages describing, in the first instance, the statue of an eagle battling a snake and in the second, an image of Helen of Troy. A comparative study of these descriptions reveals the tight nexus spun between rhetorical excellence, historical consciousness, and the appreciation of charisma. Moreover, the descriptions also reveal that charisma, for Choniates, is not a uniform quality but one that differs in degree and kind from image to image. Correspondingly, he prescribes subtle but important differences in the process of viewing them. While the sculpture of the eagle and the snake promises to captivate the viewer to the point of transfixing him or her with amazement, Helen's statue invites a rather more calibrated response in which full-fledged surrender is not the ideal to aspire toward. Instead, Helen's statue encapsulates an inherent struggle between the charisma of images and that of words in which the latter, specifically, are posited as bearing a dangerous edge. Finally, I consider the reasons why statues are so prominently favored as the bearers of charisma in the *De signis*, and not Christian relics and icons.

Charisma in Public Spaces

Choniates begins the *De signis* with an invocation of the religious authority of the newly-arrived Venetian patriarch, Tommaso Morosini.¹⁷ Declaring con-

¹⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, 556, p. 304.

¹⁷ Choniates, *Historia*, 647, p. 357.

temptuously that he was “fatter than a hog,”¹⁸ Choniates describes his clean-shaven face, his hairless chest, and some of his accoutrements, thus displaying an eye for detail and close viewing where human beings are concerned. This serves as a prelude to the notes on the statues to come, in which Choniates exhibits his descriptive powers to the full. Next on the list is the sacking of the Heroon by the Latins, who broke open the tombs of the Byzantine emperors and looted the jewels buried therein.¹⁹ Even though they looked upon the perfectly preserved corpse of Emperor Justinian as a miracle, it did not prevent them from plundering his sepulcher. The refusal to be moved by miracles and the concomitant disdain of wonder on the part of the Latins is a constant leit-motif of the epilogue. ‘Wonder’ is posited as an essential component of charisma, and the willingness to yield to it an integral aspect of the ideal viewer. The Latins fail to achieve this ideal, even when they are capable of appreciating a miracle.

The account goes on to describe the desecration of the Great Church but, interestingly, not in any detail. Choniates contents himself with mentioning the gold and silver-encrusted ciborium of the church, weighing tens of thousands of pounds, which was pulled down by the Latins.²⁰ It is surely significant that this event is dispensed with in a couple of sentences, and without a word regarding the fate of the holy icons and relics that might have been similarly defiled in the church. This maneuver serves to underscore the sheer material wealth of Constantinople, but it also highlights the narrative weight reserved for statues in the space that follows. Having thus begun with a genuflection to the religious and imperial authorities of Byzantium, Choniates swiftly moves to the subject that occupies the rest of the epilogue and displays the full force of his rhetorical expertise.

The statues are described in prose that both celebrates their magnificence and laments their loss. Part of their charisma lies in their tremendous size or height. Equestrian statues of “heroic form and admirable size,”²¹ mechanical devices placed at heights that nearly reached those of the tallest columns, a head of Hera that “could barely be carted off by four yokes of oxen,”²² so enormous was it, and a statue of Herakles “mighty in his mightiness,”²³ so large that a cord the size of a man’s belt was required merely to encircle its thumb, fea-

18 Choniates, *Historia*, 647, p. 357.

19 Choniates, *Historia*, 648, p. 357.

20 Choniates, *Historia*, 648, p. 357.

21 Choniates, *Historia*, 649, p. 358.

22 Choniates, *Historia*, 648, p. 357.

23 Choniates, *Historia*, 650, p. 358.

ture among the sights presented to the reader. The trope of size was common enough and particularly fitting to Constantinople. Visitors' accounts of the city attest to the grandeur of its monuments and the sky-scraping extremities of its columns. So impressive was this last feature to al-Harawi in the 12th century, that he expressed a wish for Constantinople to become the capital of Islam.²⁴ As Fabio Barry has tellingly pointed out, the skyline of the city was a source of continual marvel to Western travelers as well and it was, ironically, just below the Diplokionion, or the "twin columns" on the harbor of the western shore of the Bosphorus that the Latin fleet moored before they attacked the city, the columns being well-known landmarks.²⁵

But quite apart from size and height, it is the intimation of life in the city's public statuary that evokes their ancient origins and grants them a unique appeal. This holds not just for the figurative statues depicting the heroes and goddesses of yore, but also for purely mechanical contraptions such as the Anemodoulion.²⁶ This was a complicated weather-vane, a four-sided pyramidal monument carved with images of melodious birds, bleating sheep, bounding lambs, a lavish marinescape complete with swimming fish, and Erotes pelting each other with apples as they shook with laughter, as Choniates has it. Even grotesque characters such as the Sphinxes ("comely women in the front and horrible beasts in their hind parts"), and Scylla, depicted as leaning forward and on the brink of leaping into Odysseus's ship and devouring his companions, are thrilling to look at because of their intensely life-like qualities as figured by our historian's prose.²⁷

The Voices of Statues

One of the most eloquent testimonies to the moving, living element evident in the statues is the description of the eagle vanquishing the snake mentioned above. This ensemble was placed atop a column in the Hippodrome. It is worth quoting Choniates at some length in order to appreciate the descriptive

24 See the comments of Marc D. Lauxtermann, "Constantine's City: Constantine the Rhodian and the Beauty of Constantinople," in *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art. Papers from the Forty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot, 2013), p. 126.

25 Fabio Barry, "Disiecta membra: Ranieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the Spolia Style, and Justice at San Marco," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, eds. Henry Maguire and Robert S. Nelson (Washington, DC, 2010), pp. 10-11.

26 Choniates, *Historia*, 648, p. 358.

27 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

nuances of the passage and its encapsulation of a specific mode of viewership which apparently eluded the Latins. Choniates claims that the eagle was depicted with

wings [were] aflap as though attempting flight, while a coiled snake clutched in his claws prevented its being carried aloft by striking out at the winged extremities of his body. But the venomous creature accomplished nothing, for, transfixed by the sharp claws, its attack was smothered, and it appeared to be drowsy rather than ready to give battle to the bird by clinging to its wings. While the snake breathed its last and expired with its venom unspent, the eagle exulted and, all but screeching out his victory song, hastened to lift up the serpent and bore it aloft to leave no doubt as to the outcome by the flashing of his eyes and the serpent's mortification. It was said that the very sight of the snake uncoiled and incapable of delivering a deadly bite frightened away, by its example, the remaining serpents in Byzantium, convincing them to curl up and fill their holes. This eagle's likeness was remarkable ...²⁸

The passage unfolds a dynamic narrative through the medium of the sculptures under view. Beginning with the account of an incipient battle between reptile and bird in which the former, enmeshed in the claws of the latter, resists being carried off, the description switches to a victory song on behalf of the eagle. The snake, even as it attacks, "accomplishes nothing,"²⁹ appearing to sink into an eternal sleep under the strength of its winged foe while the eagle, now on the brink of triumph, apparently manages to "lift up the serpent"³⁰ and bear it aloft. Notice how the passage encompasses a series of dizzying reversals following swiftly one upon the other: the snake is said to be "coiled" and striking out at the wings of the eagle, while a few lines later the sight of the snake "uncoiled," drowsy, and "incapable of delivering a deadly bite" is supposed to have been responsible for frightening away serpents.³¹ Abrupt changes in the sequence of events are not the only contradictions played out here; they are also evident in the vivid tension imparted to the actions of the protagonists. The eagle strains to rise up in flight but is chained to the ground by the snake; however, at the end, the eagle does succeed in lifting itself, bearing its heavy burden in its claws. The snake, for all its hapless state, embraces the eagle in a

28 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, pp. 359-60.

29 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

30 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

31 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, pp. 359-60.

near-deadly clasp (it strikes out at the very extremities of the eagle's form), but it finally, and fatally, uncoils itself, presumably leaving the eagle free to take wing. Upward, downward, coiled, uncoiled, belligerent, drowsy; these paradoxes are deliberately deployed to impart a taut energy to the sculpture, transforming it into a breathing, flexing entity.

The oppositions fall within the rhetorical category of antithesis, in which striking juxtapositions serve to reinforce contradictions and to evoke a spectrum of emotions in the reader or listener, ranging from one extreme to the other. As Henry Maguire has persuasively shown, antithesis was an integral part of church decoration in Byzantium, usually designed to underline the disparate moments in the life of Christ and to bring to the fore the central paradoxes of the Christian faith.³² However, as a figure of speech and a "habit of thought"³³ for the Byzantines, it was also used in non-religious contexts. In the passage above, it serves as a lens for ideal viewership just as much as it functions as a descriptive mode for the sculpture in question. The viewer (figured by, and as, Choniates) is one whose eyes probe and rove all around the sculpture, even though his body might be held "spellbound" by its grandeur. In this sense, the viewer embodies the figure of antithesis itself, exhibiting physical stasis on the one hand and an all-seeing, moving gaze on the other. In addition, this viewer is sensitive not only to visual, but also to rhetorical, stimuli; the one mobilizes the other such that viewing transcends the act of looking to become an emotionally affective experience expressed in eloquent prose, as Choniates himself does.

The use of antithesis figures in the passage as part of the larger category of ekphrasis, which was also a vehicle for prescribing a mode of engaged, immersive viewership. The greatest ekphrasists of the classical and post-classical tradition spin elaborate narratives out of the images they describe and in doing so, negate the status of those images as inanimate objects, investing them with the very essence of life, or life-likeness.³⁴ It is this 'living' quality that renders the statues of the *De signis* so magnetic – but only to certain viewers: those endowed with a level of rhetorical sophistication (ekphrasists) and historical consciousness. Choniates underscores the latter when he traces the history of the manufacture of the eagle and snake ensemble, ascribing it to the hand of Apollonios of Tyana, famed in Late Antiquity for his proficiency in magic.³⁵ According to Choniates, Apollonios was once beseeched by the Byzantines to

32 Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (New Jersey, 1981), pp. 53-83.

33 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, p. 53.

34 See note 9 above.

35 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

free them of snake bites, and he duly did so by erecting the eagle statue on a column. The sculpture is, in the anthropologist Alfred Gell's words (concerning a quite different object and cultural context), "a physical token of the magical prowess on the part of the owner," and "the fact that he has access to the services of a carver whose artistic prowess is also the result of his access to superior carving magic."³⁶ Where Gell explores the technological feats that can enchant a viewer, leading him/her to credit the object and its maker with magical powers, in the case of the eagle and the snake ensemble, both the object and its maker were indeed associated with magic. Interestingly, Choniates derides the process whereby the statue came into being, declaring it to be the product of "those lewd rituals whose celebrants are the demons and all those who pay special honor to their secret rites."³⁷ But he immediately – paradoxically and typically – goes on to heap praise on the beauty of the sculpture, claiming that its sight "gave pleasure to onlookers and persuaded any who delighted in its aspect to stay on like those held spellbound by the sound of the Sirens' song."³⁸

Through his disparagement of the statue's origins in late antique magic and his praise of its final, spellbinding form, Choniates accomplishes several aims key to the agenda of the *De signis*. He makes a resounding claim for Orthodoxy (which was staunchly opposed to pagan magic of any kind) while simultaneously reinforcing the necessity of acknowledging Byzantium's ancient, pagan heritage. Integral to this acknowledgement is the historical context of the sculpture being viewed. Historical context is a recurrent theme of the text; the Latins' appalling ignorance of history marks them out as the savages they prove to be. So, in describing the statue of an ass with its driver following behind, Choniates emphasizes the fact that

these figures had been set up by Caesar Augustus at Actium ... because when going out at night to reconnoiter Antony's troops, he met up with a man driving an ass, and on inquiring who he was and where he was going, he was told, 'I am Nikon and my ass is Nikandros, and I am proceeding to the camp of Caesar.'³⁹

In striking contrast to Choniates's scrupulousness in gathering the historical background of the statues he describes, is the utter disinterest of the Latins in

36 Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *The Art of Anthropology. Essays and Diagrams*, ed. Eric Hirsch (London, 1999), p. 166.

37 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

38 Choniates, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

39 Choniates, *Historia*, 650, p. 359.

the same. For instance, an equestrian statue was rumored by an enduring oral tradition to have an image of a man buried under its left hoof, according to Choniates.⁴⁰ This statue was broken into pieces and cast into the fire by the Latins who, in the process, found the statue, dressed in a cloak woven of sheep's wool, under the horse's hoof. But where Choniates and other Constantinopolitans debated (usefully and knowledgeably) on the precise identity of this cloak-clad figure, the Latins "show[ed] little concern over what was said about it"⁴¹ and fed it to the flames. The Latins are blind to the beauty of the statues and deaf to the stories they have to tell.

Deafness is a wholly undesirable stance in the *De signis*, for the text posits the statues' charisma as residing not just in their form but also, critically, in their 'voices.' Certainly, every single sculptural ensemble that Choniates elaborates upon in any detail is invested with an aural force. The statues are potent vehicles of multisensory engagement with compelling sonic abilities integral to their charismatic aura, just as much as size, height, and lifelikeness. So, for instance, the birds on the Anemodoulion are expressly identified as "melodious" ones, "warbling ... springtime tunes," just as the husbandsmen carved on the same instrument carry pipes, the sheep bleat, and the Erotes shake with "sweet laughter."⁴² Herakles's lion skin is said to "look terrifying even in bronze, almost as though it might give out a roar and frighten the helpless populace standing nearby."⁴³ Here it isn't even an animate figure that has the potential to roar – not a lion as one might expect – but a skin made from the beast's pelt that adorns the mighty hero. The cloak acquires the intimidating vocal abilities of the animal from whose flesh it is fashioned (even though the cloak is actually crafted from bronze); herein lies the wonder of the statue, quite apart from its gigantic stature.⁴⁴ Yet another statue of a man mounted on a horse is said to have "fiercely breathed out war," as a consequence of which the horse "pricked up its ears as though in response to the war trumpet."⁴⁵ This ensemble is said to be positioned on the hand of another, larger statue of a youthful woman; an interesting indicator of the fact that sonar capability is not necessarily connected to the size of the statue. Even a miniature confection enfolded within a more imposing structure can possess a ferociously commanding voice.

40 Choniates, *Historia*, 649, p. 358.

41 Choniates, *Historia*, 649, p. 358.

42 Choniates, *Historia*, 648, p. 358.

43 Choniates, *Historia*, 650, p. 358.

44 For further observations on the cloak, see Chatterjee, "Sculpted Eloquence," p. 398.

45 Choniates, *Historia*, 653, p. 361.

Sound in the eagle and snake sculpture is significant in its own right (as compared to sound in the other sculptural ensembles mentioned). It operates on (at least) two levels. First, the general view of the sculpture atop the column works to hold the (ideal) viewer in its thrall; according to Choniatēs, it functions much like the Sirens' song which captivated its listeners.⁴⁶ The simile of the Sirens is filled with a baleful resonance, implying a fatal attraction to sound which results in the listener's death. In the *De signis*, however, 'death' is construed as a receptive stillness on the part of the viewer to the statue in question. The latter is described as "persuading" such viewers to linger in the wake of its spell. The theme of persuasion is important here, entailing the dimension of reciprocity that is so fundamental to the operation of charisma. Only a viewer *willing* to respond to the call of the statues can unleash their visual and sonar powers. Attentive eyes and ears, in return, are rewarded by the most stunning optical and aural effects of the images on display. The resulting experience is that of a mutual give and take, whereby the statues garner due praise for their charisma and the viewer is gifted with a thrillingly multisensory experience in exchange for his or her attention.

The second level at which sound permeates the eagle and snake sculpture is as a coda to the process of viewing. Only by apprehending the eagle's screech, is its "victory song" made audible to the viewer, who can then complete the narrative which began as a battle between equally matched rivals. No less important is the sight of the snake breathing its last. Sound is conjured through the visual depiction of the serpent expiring, its "venom unspent."⁴⁷ Interspersed with the cries of the creatures are the sounds of flapping wings and the gradual smothering of the snake, not as explicitly evoked as the eagle's screech, to be sure, but unmistakably woven into the description. Even as the viewer gazes at every detail of the sculpture, he or she hears the sound effects accompanying each stage of the narrative the sculpture depicts.

The longest – and most convoluted – paean to sound as an integral component of charismatic images occurs in Choniatēs's description of the statue of Helen of Troy. "What of the white-armed, beautiful-ankled, and long-necked Helen," he asks,

who mustered the entire host of the Hellenes and overthrew Troy, whence she sailed to the Nile and, after a long absence, returned to the abodes of

46 Choniatēs, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

47 Choniatēs, *Historia*, 651, p. 359.

the Laconians? Was she able to placate the implacable? Was she able to soften those men whose hearts were made of iron?⁴⁸

The crescendo of queries is no mere rhetorical posturing; it conveys this viewer's detailed knowledge of the intricate history of Helen herself – her role in the Trojan war and its aftermath – and not just of the image that resembles her. The description of this statue, in particular, confounds the delicate line between image and subject for it is often impossible to tell which is being referred to – again, a classic ekphrastic maneuver. This statue also serves to compound the barrier separating the Byzantines (the ideal viewers) and the Latins, for the latter are unnatural in not being softened by the maiden (and her statue) who was responsible for launching a thousand ships. The reference to the “iron hearts” of the Latins takes on a specific resonance later in the passage, which I shall discuss in due course.

Suffice it to say that “she who had enslaved every onlooker with her beauty” failed to do so with the obdurate Latins,

even though she was appareled ornately; though fashioned of bronze, she appeared as fresh as morning dew, anointed with the moistness of erotic love on her garment, veil, diadem, and braid of hair. Her vesture was finer than spider webs, and the veil was cunningly wrought in its place ... The lips were like flower cups, slightly parted as though she were about to speak; the graceful smile, at once greeting the spectator, filled him with delight; her flashing eyes, her arched eyebrows, and the shapeliness of the rest of her body were such that they cannot be described in words and depicted for future generations.⁴⁹

The account of Helen's beauteous form and her adornments culminates in the reference to her lips that appear to be on the brink of speech. The trajectory leading from close, detailed description to intimations of sound is also evident in the accounts of the other statues in the *De signis*, but what sets Helen apart from her peers, as it were, is the fact that her voice is not immediately registered. Indeed, one never actually hears what Helen has to say, unlike the eagle's screech that signals its triumph in no uncertain terms (at least as Choniates describes it, whether the screech is actually heard by the viewer or not). In Helen's case, the viewer/reader must extrapolate the contents of her never-spoken speech from the narrative context of the great epics in which she

48 Choniates, *Historia*, 652, p. 360.

49 Choniates, *Historia*, 652, p. 360.

features. Choniates underscores his familiarity with those epics in the very form of his address to Helen (or her statue, as you will). Tellingly, this is the sole instance in the *De signis* in which the historian directly poses a question to the statue he describes. Sound is the medium connecting viewer and viewed in a dialogic intimacy in which the statue speaks through her form. Crucially, her interlocutor must interpret her speech by means of his prior knowledge of her history.

“O Helen, Tyndareus’s daughter, the very essence of loveliness, off-shoot of Eros, ward of Aphrodite, nature’s most perfect gift,” Choniates declares,

... where is your drug granted you by Thon’s wife which banishes pain and sorrow and brings forgetfulness of every ill? Where are your irresistible love charms? Why did you not make one of these now as you did long ago? But I suspect that the Fates had foreordained that you should succumb to the flame’s fervor so that your image should no longer enflame spectators with sexual passions. It was said that these Aeneadae condemned you to the flames as retribution for Troy’s having been laid waste by the firebrand because of your scandalous amours.⁵⁰

Choniates weaves a series of implied narratives from his persistent interrogation of Helen, each of which glorifies the power of rhetorical brilliance and simultaneously discloses its deceptive dimensions. This maneuver also paves the way for an interrogation of the seductive potential of the statue, which is figured as an intrinsic component of its narrative complexity. Let us begin by examining one of those implied narratives, the “drug” given to Helen by Thon’s wife which refers to a specific episode in the *Odyssey*, Book 4, when Telemachus and Peisistratus arrive in Sparta in time to attend a celebration for the marriage between Menelaus’s son by a slave-woman and his daughter by Helen.⁵¹ Initially disguised, the identities of Telemachus and Peisistratus are gradually uncovered, and the joyous feast dissolves into a dirge as those present recall the tragic losses of the Trojan War and weep. In order to calm the situation (and perhaps for other, more sinister motives), Helen throws a drug into the wine. Sorrow and pain – Choniates’s very words – are then banished from the banqueters’ hearts such that “no tear would [have rolled] down [their] face, not if [their] mother died and [their] father died, not if men murdered a brother or a beloved son in [their] presence ... and [they] with [their] own eyes

50 Choniates, *Historia*, 652, p. 360.

51 Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 4, trans. Edward McCrorie (Baltimore, 2004), ll. 1-305.

saw it.”⁵² Having thus ridden the feast of sorrow, and thereby of historical and personal memory, indeed, having rendered the banqueters well-nigh impervious to any sort of natural emotion, Helen proceeds to spin a tale of her own.

This is the point where Choniates’s description of Helen’s half-open lips acquires an ominous significance. As Matthew Gumpert has remarked in a different but entirely relevant context, the virtues of Helen’s drug are highly ambiguous, for “to forget all sorrows, as the frightening image of familial slaughter played out before our eyes suggests, is also to lose all sense of ethical distinctions.”⁵³ Oddly enough, it would seem that Choniates wishes Helen’s drug had made the Latins even more obdurately insensitive to history and its personal consequences than they already are. By invoking the multiple roles of Helen as the means to historical oblivion, *femme fatale*, and a would-be narrator (albeit, one whose narrative remains unheard in the *De signis*), Choniates endows her statue with the simultaneous potential for seduction and speech. In other words, the charisma of Helen’s statue resides not just in her alluring form, but also in her status as a narrator. But since her drug failed to prepare the Latins for her charms (as a woman and a narrator), the tale she is on the point of telling is silenced even before it begins.

What might Helen have said were she permitted to speak? This is a critical point in the passage, since the oblique mention of her unspoken speech encompasses a wealth of detail significant to Choniates’s polemic, and to his conception of the ideal viewer. According to scholars, the tale Helen spun to her audience in the *Odyssey* was a curious one. In her famous reading of the scene, Anne T. Bergren contends that Helen’s narrative presents an image of herself designed to impress and delight her listeners.⁵⁴ The statue of Helen, as figured by Choniates’s prose, strives toward the same effects; it has the ability to banish the pain of historical conflict in order to concentrate the viewer’s (and listener’s) focus purely on its own delectable being and the words it/she speaks. But by underscoring the narrative potential of Helen’s statue, Choniates also implicitly exposes the dangers of historical narration by cunning narrators. In doing so, he highlights the potentially menacing charisma of words as opposed to images. The entire passage endorses a viewer’s absorption in Helen’s *image*, but it warns that viewer not to listen to Helen’s *words*. Or put

52 Matthew Gumpert, *Grafting Helen. The Abduction of the Classical Past* (Madison, WI, 2001), p. 41.

53 Gumpert, *Grafting Helen*, p. 41.

54 Anne T. Bergren, “Helen’s ‘Good Drug’ *Odyssey* IV 1-305,” in *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics and Interpretation of Classical Texts*, ed. Stephen Kresic (Ottawa, 1981), pp. 201-14.

another way, the ideal viewer is well enough versed in the epics and the arts of eloquence to be wary of a narrator of the likes of Helen. The ideal response to this statue is *not* construed as complete surrender to its charisma, but as a strategic, calibrated approach whereby its beauty should be acknowledged as the overpowering thing it is, but its voice must be scrupulously resisted.

Choniates goes on to elaborate on the motif of Helen's love potion that failed to have its effect. In the process, he doesn't merely describe a failed exchange, in which the Latins reveal themselves as woefully inadequate viewers; he also takes apart *the kind of* exchange that does occur, and which is a travesty of what *should have* occurred. Helen's spell rebounds on herself. This is also the case in the episode from the *Odyssey* mentioned earlier, for following Helen's tale is the one told by her husband, Menelaus, which contradicts and casts doubt on his wife's preceding narrative. In Bergren's words, "By permitting Menelaus to recall without pain, what pain might have kept beyond recall, Helen's 'good drug' and her 'good tale' have reminded Menelaus of another ... one that violates her claim to *kleos*."⁵⁵ Helen's drug works against her own credibility as a narrator.

Just as Helen's pacifying drug recoils on its practitioner by weakening the strength of her tale, so too Helen's statue, drug-like in its capacity for inducing passion, boomerangs on itself. Choniates claims that "... these Aeneadae condemned you to the flames as retribution for Troy's having been laid waste by the firebrand because of your scandalous amours."⁵⁶ The essential lack of sympathy between the Latins and the statues on display in Constantinople – particularly that of Helen – is partly due to the "iron hearts" of the invaders. An epigram from the *Anthologia Graeca*, although dated to the early centuries of Byzantium, is appropriate in this context. Issuing from the mouth of a certain Callirhoe, a courtesan, it claims that an admirer by the name of Thomas who had set up a portrait of her, "show[ed] all the ardor in his breast; for like wax is his heart melting."⁵⁷ It has been argued convincingly that the portrait in question must have been in the medium of encaustic, or melted wax. Thus Thomas, the admiring viewer, emulates the very medium of the image he looks at, his heart melting like the wax of which Callirhoe's portrait is composed. Unlike Thomas, however, the Latins are burdened with hearts of iron that do not respond to the majestic malleability of bronze. Even when Helen's statue is consumed by the flames, the invaders remain unmoved. This is hardly sur-

55 Bergren, "Helen's 'Good Drug,'" p. 210.

56 Choniates, *Historia*, 652, p. 360.

57 See the translation and excerpt in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto, 1986), p. 119.

prising for these men are as impervious to the charms of living women as they are to statues. In the course of the passages dedicated to Helen, Choniates mentions “the frequent selling and sending away of their women for a few coins while they attended the gaming tables and were engrossed in draughts all day long ...”⁵⁸ Empathy, even desire, for another human being are posited here as natural impulses which the Latins shockingly violate. How much further are they, then, from fashioning themselves as the ideal viewers and recipients of the charisma of images which, we recall, requires a rather more sophisticated training?

But for all their crudeness, the Latins successfully dodge the flames of erotic enchantment and turn them back upon their source. They combat their own potential for sexual passion by drowning Helen’s image in fire, thus positioning themselves as characters on a par with the cunning Odysseus himself. In this instance, at least, Choniates betrays his own characterization of the Latins as being unsusceptible to charisma; indeed, it may be argued that where Helen’s statue is concerned, the Latins destroyed it partly *because* of their appreciation and wariness of its powers. The frenzied destruction of the Constantinopolitan statues seems to hint at some deeper motive other than the naked greed that Choniates attributes to the enemy.

But, as our historian reveals in the lines that follow, this is too generous an interpretation of Latin behavior. The ability to circumvent a love-spell requires not only the subtlety of recognizing its verbal and visual components, a skill the Latins signally lack.⁵⁹ More importantly, the power of this particular spell resides in the knowledge of its impressive past; in Helen’s role in having mustered the host of Hellenes and overthrowing Troy, as Choniates reminds the reader when he opens his description. The Latins, however, are said to be “wholly ignorant of their ABCs, the ability to read and knowledge of those epic verses sung of you.”⁶⁰

The epic voice alluded to here is emphatically historical. Choniates’s reference to Homer is part of a series of Homeric formulae that are strewn throughout his narrative, including his characterization of historical figures as Homeric heroes or villains.⁶¹ The incorporation of such epic elements in his

58 Choniates, *Historia*, 652, p. 360.

59 On love spells specifically, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA, 2001). For love spells more generally, see Henry Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC, 1995).

60 Choniates, *Historia*, 653, p. 360.

61 Roderick Saxey, “The Homeric Metamorphoses of Andronikos I Komnenos,” in *Niketas Choniates*, pp. 120-43.

chronicle allows Choniates to frame historical episodes as tragic or comic. The Latins' neglect of the epic past, then, amounts to their lack of knowledge regarding the *historical* past. This, in turn, leads directly to their inability to sustain human civilization, despite their territorial conquests. The destruction of the public statuary of Constantinople attests to this. Constantinople belongs to the Latins, but it is a sorry victory on their part, bereft of images, of ideal viewers, and of the gift of charisma.

Epilogue

Why does Choniates locate charisma almost exclusively in *pagan* statues, neglecting Christian icons and relics altogether? For a stridently polemical text which consistently posits Orthodox Christianity and Byzantium as far superior to the Latins (even though the Byzantines often fall short of their natural loftiness, much to Choniates's dismay), the *Historia* astonishingly fails to elaborate on that mainstay of Orthodoxy: the holy icon. Images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints make purely perfunctory appearances in it and are not granted the lavish, even loving, attention our historian bestows on the statues in the epilogue. When religious monuments such as the Great Church (Hagia Sophia) are mentioned, they are described as being duly beautiful and inimitable, but the descriptions have none of the ekphrastic ingenuity reserved for the statues. As Titos Papamastorakis points out, "His [Choniates's] Constantinople was an ancient city whose beauty resided more in the classical monuments which embellished it and less in the splendor of its Christian churches as all the other Byzantine authors of the Middle and Late Byzantine periods seemed to think. In fact, Choniates views the Christian buildings as if they had merely slipped in."⁶² Consequently, icons and relics are presented as being bereft of the kind of charisma the statues appear to be so rich in.

This omission is startling, not least when we consider the fact that it was precisely the *holy image* that was upheld as an integral part of Orthodoxy, and which was one of the most powerful identifiers of Byzantine culture in the medieval world. The Latins demolished just as many churches, religious images, and liturgical furnishings as they did statues – Choniates does mention some of these in the earlier sections of the *Historia* – and some of the former were renowned as being formidably charismatic. The icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, for instance, drew large numbers of spectators from within and without Constantinople on the occasion of the famous Tuesday miracle when,

62 Papamastorakis, "Interpreting the *De signis* of Niketas Choniates," p. 223.

after refusing to be lifted by various confraternity members, the image suddenly allowed itself to be carried aloft with ease, belying its own tremendous weight.⁶³ The equally famous Friday miracle, in which a veil covering an icon of the Virgin and Christ lifted itself and stayed put until the following day, was yet another attraction avidly awaited by citizens and tourists alike.⁶⁴ In addition to these icons, the city possessed an enormous and enviable cache of holy relics as mentioned above, stored in churches and chapels and which were no less potent in bringing hordes of pilgrims to the city. In short, the powers of holy icons and relics are well attested to in various sources, and were even spectacularized, as the Tuesday and Friday miracles mentioned above suggest. Yet Choniates's chronicle marginalizes this entire category of images and objects, even as it makes a searing case for some of the most cherished ideals of Byzantium and Orthodoxy in general.

Why are statues the favored bearers of charisma for Choniates? In order to answer this question, it is important to address the status of the *De signis* as an epilogue. In signaling the end of the historical narrative it delineates, it also equates the end of a glorious empire with the destruction of its wealth of *statuary*, not its holy images. Statues are thus explicitly yoked to imperial power; their destruction to imperial dissolution. By constantly alluding to their ancient pedigree, Choniates advances the statues as the critical markers of the heritage of Byzantium and the empire's identity as Romanía, the continuation of the ancient Roman empire. In their very status as 'old' artifacts, they are imagined to connect to a remote point of origin. As Christopher S. Wood remarks in a different but related context, "The early history of Europe was not forgotten ... The historical imagination was a kaleidoscope of shifting, overlapping, animated shadows, crowded by a fabulous pagan and prehistoric past that seemed to have left the most tangible of traces ..."⁶⁵

The above scenario applies well to the purposes of the *De signis*. In it, the statues stand as symbols of historical continuity, having adorned Constantinople since the time of its foundation. Indeed, as mentioned above, some of them existed long before the city ever came into being, having been trans-

63 See Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), pp. 129-43; and Alexei Lidov, "The Flying Hodegetria. The Miraculous Icon as Bearer of Sacred Space," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome, 2004), pp. 291-321.

64 See Charles Barber, "Living Painting or the Limits of Painting?: Glancing at Icons with Michael Psellos," in *Reading Michael Psellos*, eds. Charles Barber and David Jenkins (Leiden, 2006); and Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 145-64.

65 Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction. Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 2008), p. 34.

ported from various parts of the Roman empire to the new capital.⁶⁶ Their continued existence and display despite the Christianization of the empire serve as constant reminders of the origins of Byzantium, and is as critical a dimension of the cityscape as the numerous churches and monasteries dotting it (as construed by the *De signis*). Indeed, several of the statues were perceived to be invested with prophetic powers and the ability to foretell the fortunes of the city and, by extension, of the empire itself. The statues, therefore, plotted out an alternative topography for the Constantinopolitans; one that was parallel to the eschatological dimension encapsulated by the religious structures of the city and which was no less valued in this capacity. Their termination, for Choniatas, is the material manifestation of an abrupt break in the history of the Romans which, until 1204, had apparently continued uninterrupted since antiquity.

Although in 1261 the Crusaders were ousted, Constantinople was reconquered by Michael VIII Palaiologos, and a flurry of building and restoration projects ensued,⁶⁷ the capital never managed to recapture the glory embodied by its wealth of ancient statuary. The remarks in a letter by Manuel Chrysoloras in 1411 are telling in this regard. Chrysoloras mentions the magnificence of the ancient *ruins* of Constantinople (New Rome) as he compares them to the antique fragments that dot the landscape of Rome ('Old' Rome, as Chrysoloras puts it).⁶⁸ But the charismatic aura of the statues is gone, a thing of the past to be remembered and lamented over, but never to be seen – or heard – again.

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- 67 Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), 243-61.
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Disenchantment: Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* and Male Revenge Fantasy

Gavin T. Richardson

In contrast to most forms of authority, charisma is always seen as benevolent and life-affirming, at least until disenchantment sets in.¹



If we are to believe what Thomas Hoccleve says about his own writing, around 1420 a friend asked him to translate a tale from the *Gesta Romanorum* with the ostensible purpose of teaching his 15-year-old son to avoid the wiles of women. The concerned father wants his son to learn that women can be “deere and ouer deere boght,” leaving a young man’s purse empty and hastening him to his “confusioun” (15-21).² Hoccleve at first hesitated on the project, fearing that he would be regarded as a misogynist if he translated such a tale. He had already engendered some ill will by translating Christine de Pisan’s *Letter of Cupid* in 1402. This “defense” of women was poorly received, perhaps because it rehearsed a number of antifeminist commonplaces, or because it was believed to have parodied the original *Letter*.³ Indeed, Hoccleve’s words against women

1 C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 9.

2 Thomas Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, in *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, eds. Frederick J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz (Oxford, 1970), pp. 215-42, at p. 216. The *Tale of Jonathas* is edited from Durham University Library Cosin v.iii.9, which survives in holograph. See Thomas Hoccleve: *A Facsimile of the Autograph Verse Manuscripts: Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino (California), MSS HM III and HM 744; University Library, Durham (England), MS Cosin v. III. 9*, eds. J.A. Burrow and A.I. Doyle (Oxford, 2002), fols. 77r-95r. A more recent edition is Thomas Hoccleve, *My Complaynte' and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter, 2001), pp. 234-55. In this essay I have used Furnivall's text but have followed Ellis in removing virgules that occur within lines.

3 On the reception of Hoccleve's translation then and now, see Karen A. Winstead, “I am al othir to yow than yee weene’: Hoccleve, Women, and the *Series*,” *Philological Quarterly* 72 (1993), 143-55.

were said to have been so plentiful as to “fille ... a quarter sak.”⁴ However, Hoccleve’s friend assured him that depicting the sins of evil women would do no disservice to the good. Hoccleve consented, and the result is one of the most violent male revenge fantasies in all of English literature, the *Tale of Jonathas*.

In many ways, the *Tale of Jonathas* is a useful text for exploring the theories on charisma C. Stephen Jaeger sets forth in *Enchantment*: “This book ... is about an aspect of the sublime style, which I will call ‘charismatic art.’ This mode also ‘conceals’ reality – or at least clothes it – in brilliance; it diminishes the reasoning faculty, speaks to the imagination, and exercises an ‘enthraling’ effect on the reader or viewer.”⁵ Through the centuries, Hoccleve’s *Tale of Jonathas* has exhibited many of these features, particularly the enthralling effect central to Jaeger’s description. While assessing the reception of medieval works is often a difficult or impossible task, manuscript evidence shows that this tale enjoyed strong cultural currency. In his edition of Hoccleve’s *Series* – the collective term for the *Complaint*, *Dialogue with a Friend*, the *Tale of Jereslaus’s Wife*, *Learn to Die*, and the *Tale of Jonathas* – Roger Ellis references six manuscripts containing a version of the tale in the Anglo-Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, two manuscripts containing a prose version in the Middle English *Gesta*, seven manuscripts containing a Latin or Anglo-Latin *Gesta* version, six manuscripts containing the poem itself as part of the *Series*, and three manuscripts containing the poem along with Hoccleve’s other *Gesta* translation, *The Tale of Jereslaus’s Wife*.⁶ William Browne would copy Hoccleve’s poem virtually word-for-word as the First Eclogue of his *Shepheard’s Pipe* of 1614, and in this form it would be republished in the 18th and 19th centuries, appearing in William

4 Thomas Hoccleve, *Dialogue with a Friend*, in *Hoccleve’s Works: The Minor Poems*, line 669, p. 138.

5 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 2.

6 For a generous discussion of the relevant manuscript traditions, see Hoccleve, “My Compleinte,” pp. viii-ix and 10-41, esp. 23-26. The two prose versions (British Library Harley 7333 and Additional 9066) appear in Sidney J.H. Herrtage, *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum* (London, 1879). (Herrtage also consulted a prose version in Cambridge University Library Kk. 1.6.) British Library Harley 7333 serves as the base text for *Godfridus a Wise Emperoure*, in *The Trials and Joys of Marriage*, ed. Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, 2002), pp. 169-76. In the Latin *Gesta* the tale appears as *De mulierum subtili deceptione*, ed. Hermann Oesterley (1872; repr. New York, 1980), Cap. 120, pp. 466-70. The Anglo-Latin version that is likely Hoccleve’s immediate source has been edited from British Library Harley 2270 as an appendix to Jerome Mitchell’s unpublished dissertation: “Thomas Hoccleve: His Traditionalism and His Individuality,” Ph.D. diss. (Durham, NC, 1965), pp. 315-28.

Hazlitt's 1869 collection of Browne's *Works*.⁷ More recently, Peter Jorgensen has demonstrated the tale's Scandinavian survival from the Middle Ages through the 19th century in folk retellings.⁸ While popularity alone does not define charismatic art, it does suggest that the *Tale of Jonathas* had a peculiar imaginative appeal that extended over half a millennium in a variety of forms.

Much of this essay, however, is about disenchantment, or the way in which charismatic elements often give way to disillusion, particularly in medieval male revenge fantasy. This genre is discussed at greater length below, but for now, male revenge fantasy might be defined as a tale in which a woman shames and discards a naïve would-be lover, only to suffer violently in the end. This plotline describes texts from the medieval East and West, such as Boccaccio's "Tale of Elene and Rinieri" (*Decameron* 8.7), Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, and Farīd Al-Dīn Aṭṭār's narrative of Sheikh Sam'an from the 12th-century Persian *Conference of the Birds* (*Mantiq al-Tayr*). It is even possible to consider Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* as a thwarted male revenge fantasy in which the menace of sexual violence is transmuted into slapstick comedy by Nicholas's windy intervention. Using Thomas Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* as a representative example, I hope to show that the force of such narratives largely depends on key elements of Jaeger's charismatology: a structure that makes use of the abject-to-exalted heroic movement,⁹ a kind of dark imitation as a weak protagonist achieves mastery over his formerly dominant shamer, and a violent conclusion that mirrors the kinds of violence visited upon persons and even works of art that had formerly enthralled the perpetrators. My reading of Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* seeks to demonstrate how male revenge fantasy operates at the intersection of enchantment, disenchantment, and misogyny, and it concludes by suggesting what this poem might have meant for Hoccleve and his readers through the ages.

Hoccleve's poem begins with a dying Emperor parceling out his patrimony to his three sons; the eldest receives land while the second son receives his movable wealth. To his youngest son, Jonathas, the Emperor bequeaths a ring that compels people to love the wearer, a brooch that will grant any material possession, and a magic carpet that will bear anyone anywhere. Jonathas goes

7 William Browne, *The Poems of William Browne of Tavistock*, ed. Gordon Goodwin (London, 1894), Eclogue 1.137-724, pp. 91-116; William Browne, *The Whole Works of William Browne*, ed. William Hazlitt, 2 (London, 1869), pp. 178-96. The text has also been edited by James Doelman in *Early Stuart Pastoral* (Toronto, 1999), pp. 27-54. Doelman questions Browne's sole authorship of the First Eclogue, p. 10.

8 *The Story of Jonatas in Iceland* (Reykjavík, 1997).

9 On this movement, see Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 83.

to university and quickly falls in love with a prostitute named Fellicula, who is amazed at the lifestyle Jonathas enjoys thanks to his magical talismans. In a series of seductions, Fellicula acquires these talismans one after the other, each time sending Jonathas back to his mother to beg the next and endure a humiliating maternal “I told you so.” Once Fellicula has all the talismans, she discards Jonathas and then falls gravely ill. After a long sojourn in a dangerous and enchanted land, Jonathas returns to Fellicula with the power to heal her. Instead, however, he gives her marvelous fruit and water that result in her graphic death: “Hir wombe opned and out fil eche entraille” (664).¹⁰ Jonathas returns home to his mother, with whom, we are assured, he lives happily ever after.

Hoccleve’s Jonathas bears affinities with Marie de France’s Lanval as a disenfranchised young man whose meager inheritance is compensated for by supernatural elements, romance, and adventure. His story might be read as a simple wonder tale about the power of magical talismans – ring, brooch, carpet. It is tempting to regard these as “charismatic objects” because of their power, but theirs really is a false charisma, if charisma is to be understood as “an effect of physical presence,”¹¹ a property inseparable from the person who wields them. Although the ring has the supernatural power to make people love Jonathas, this gift is different from the kind of transformative and individualized *charis* the gods bestow upon Odysseus among the Phaeacians.¹² Jonathas is hardly made godlike, and Fellicula remains capable of exposing his youthful gullibility and naiveté. Indeed, the magical talismans principally serve to enable a false socialization. Because his ring compels others to love him (“who-so þat the ryng vsith for to were, / Of alle folke the loue he shal conquire” (104-05)),¹³ the objects keep Jonathas in a state of arrested development. His acquisition of friendship is every bit as artificial as his procured relationship with the prostitute-paramour Fellicula. Thus the poem opens with a kind of misdirection; we are made to think that the poem is about magical talismans, but these objects only point to the figure who dominates the tale: the prostitute Fellicula. Indeed, Hoccleve’s transition from the contextualizing prologue to the story itself reveals an emphasis not on talismans, or the “wise

10 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 239.

11 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 9.

12 Cf. Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 78-79.

13 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 219.

emperor," or even the protagonist Jonathas himself, but on "a certain evil woman": "incipit / fabula de quadam muliere mala."¹⁴

The power that this *mala mulier* exerts over Jonathas is so profound that Fellicula, not his magical talismans, better qualifies as a charismatic entity within the world of the text. Discussing Fellicula as a charismatic character is deeply problematic; she embodies many of the features of Jaeger's charisma-tology, but her effects upon Jonathas are so destructive that she fails to fulfill its most vital aspect: affirming life. Indeed, in this regard, she could even be described as anti-charismatic. Perhaps, then, it is more accurate to say that Fellicula exhibits some of the working parts of charisma that characterize her and catalyze the narrative processes of revenge, beginning with the enthralling power she has over Jonathas. Jaeger considers the association between charisma and influence by cataloguing six effects of charisma, which I have redacted below:

1. It compels people to follow by the force that I've called "body magic."
2. It inspires a sense of affirmation in the viewer or follower ...
3. It uncouples the critical sense, overrides judgment, as it lessens individual will.
4. It enlarges the person who possesses it, or some simulation of the person constructed either in the mind of the charismatic person or in the minds of the devotees ...
5. It inspires imitation, awakens the urge to be like the charismatic person
...
6. It stimulates the imagination, makes the spellbound fan or disciple dream the dreams of the leader ...¹⁵

These categories are developed more generously in *Enchantment*, but this excerpted summary will help describe the power Fellicula holds over Jonathas, particularly by demonstrating effects 1, 2, and 3. Most obviously, Fellicula compels Jonathas to do her bidding not so much by the sheer force of her educative presence (a dimension of Jaeger's "body magic"), but through a body magic of a more literal sort – the power of sex. Hoccleve says that she was "gay, fresh and pykid ... to the sale," and that Jonathas met her "[b]y the streetes of the univerte" (164, 160), clearly defining her status as prostitute. Fellicula is simply called a *concupina* in the Latin, but Hoccleve's name for her is etymologically

14 These lines are unnumbered in Furnivall's text but occur just before line 85. Ellis uses this Latin phrase as the title of the poem in his edition.

15 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 22-23.

associated with Latin, Middle English, and Old French words for poison, treachery, and deceit.¹⁶ She solicits the secret of Jonathas's first magical talisman when they are in bed together, arguing that he should trust his lover because she has given him her virginity – a highly dubious assertion coming from a prostitute, but a calculating one that recognizes both the market demand for sex and the premium placed on virginity. Jonathas is aware of the risks of confession (“‘If y telle it,’ quod he ‘par auenture / Thow wilt deskeuere it & out it publisshē: / Swich is wommannes inconstant nature” (190-93)).¹⁷ He even appeals to a bit of proverbial wisdom by noting that garrulous women “can nat kepe conseil worth a risshe.”¹⁸ But Jonathas is firmly under Fellicula's spell, and while the tale characterizes this spell in clearly erotic terms, Fellicula's command extends beyond the enervating power of sex. Her rhetorical skill is a vital dimension of her control as she “uncouples the critical sense” of Jonathas, even when sex is not in play. A survey of the poem's plotline demonstrates how she continually overrides Jonathas's judgment:

When he tells her the secret power of his ring. (ll. 204-12)

When he gives her the ring for safekeeping, “[y]euynge un-to hir wordes ful credence,-” (ll. 225-31)

When he comforts her after she “loses” the ring. (ll. 246-52)

When he returns with the brooch and takes her back again. (ll. 274-80)

When he gives her the brooch and asks her advice on how to keep it safe. (ll. 309-24)

When he uncritically forgives her for her “loss” of the brooch. (ll. 336-43)

When he abandons his plans to leave her at the end of the world.

(ll. 400-06)

When he divulges the magic carpet's power. (ll. 414-18)

Readers may not receive enough detail about Fellicula to fully understand her extraordinary hold on Jonathas; indeed, she may not seem particularly charismatic to the reader. Nevertheless, it is clear that Hoccleve wants readers to understand that *Jonathas* perceives Fellicula to possess significant working parts of charisma. For much of the poem he is powerless against her, even when he is prepared for her verbal seduction. After losing the ring to her,

16 E.g. Latin *fel*, “gall”; Middle English and Old French *fel*, “treacherous, deceitful, false; guileful, crafty; villainous, base; wicked, evil”; *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “fel (adj.).” Hoccleve alludes to this etymology in the *Tale of Jonathas*, lines 634-36, p. 238.

17 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 222.

18 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 222.

Jonathas promises himself that he will guard the secret of the magic brooch, but after Fellicula solicits his trust once again, "Jonathas thought hir wordes so sweete, / Þat he was dronke of the plesant swetnesse / Of hem ..." (ll. 304-06). This intoxication is quite literally a "surrender of the will." Her sweet talk is conventional but no less efficacious for that. When a weeping Fellicula says that she is afraid of Jonathas losing his magic brooch, he abdicates his own judgment, asking, "[N]ow, what ... woldist thou in this cas consaille?" (313-04), signaling his "sense of affirmation in the viewer or follower," and rhetorically reversing his earlier proverbial pronouncement that women cannot keep secrets. Her will has now become his.

After losing both ring and brooch, Jonathas finally prepares to punish Fellicula by abandoning her at the end of the world via his magic carpet, but he ultimately forgives Fellicula a third time. In a remarkably accelerated passage, Jonathas then falls asleep, Samson-like, in the lap of his paramour, but not before divulging the secret of the magic carpet:

"Swich vertu hath this clooth on which we sitte,"
 Seide he "þat where in this world us be list,
 Sodeynly with the thought shuln thidir flitte,
 And how thidir come un-to us unwist,
 As thyng fro fer unknowen in the mist."
 And ther-with to this womman fraudulent,
 "To sleepe," he seide, "have I good talent;" (ll. 414-20)

This shift from explanation to sleep is so abrupt as to be almost comic, like Nick Bottom's enchanted slumber with Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me" (4.1.39). But perhaps this artless narcolepsy illustrates the depths of Jonathas's enchantment. He loses consciousness only to wake up abandoned at the end of the world. His inexplicable slumber is a metaphor for the power Fellicula wields over him – a power that defies rational explanation.

The working parts of charisma that characterize Fellicula set the stage for the revenge that is to follow, contributing to a second dimension of charisma in the tale: the power of revenge narrative itself. When Fellicula betrays Jonathas at the end of the world, she prompts the foolish protagonist to become a powerful avenger by first plunging him into Jaeger's abject state, a state in which he is "as low as he can go"¹⁹:

19 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 83.

Whan he awook and neithir he ne fond
 Womman ne clooth he wepte bittirly,
 And seide, "allas now is ther in no lond
 Man werse, I trowe, begoon than am y!"
 On euery syde his looke he caste, and sy
 Nothyng but briddes in the eir fleyng,
 And wylde beestes aboute him rennyng. (442-48)²⁰

Hoccleve takes this opportunity to stress Jonathas's humiliation here, with the narrator shaming Jonathas directly: "thy paramour maad hath thy berd" (433).²¹ Such derision marks his nadir. He has been repeatedly duped by his lover, chided by this mother, abandoned through his own naiveté, and even disparaged by the poem's narrator. His abandonment provides a powerful geographical correlative to his psychological state: he is at wit's end at world's end. Here it is helpful to compare Jonathas's situation to Homer's description of Odysseus arriving shipwrecked among the Phaeacians, which Jaeger uses to detail the hero's movement from abject to exalted states: "Homer needed Odysseus to enter this happy land of beauty and excellence barely clinging to life, stripped of every possession and every physical quality. His starting point had to be set low so that the rise would be all the more dramatic."²² A few paragraphs later we learn that a formal charisma is inherent in this structure: "The dynamics of the narrative work are measured by the changes in the trajectory of the hero's development. If the dynamics move from falling low to rising high, the effect, in epic certainly, is charismatic."²³ Thus two principal types of charisma are at play in the *Odyssey*: a charisma that relates to character, and a charisma that relates to form. In the *Odyssey*, these two types of charisma mutually reinforce one another, as the *charis* of the hero is enhanced by the narrative movement that exalts him.

Compared to that of Odysseus, one might even say that Jonathas's *Aufstiegshöhe* – Jaeger's term for the distance a protagonist must climb from low to high

²⁰ Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, pp. 231-32.

²¹ Hoccleve's narration – with its talk of beards – invokes medieval language of social embarrassment and ridicule, like Nicholas's cry, "A berd! A berd!" when Absolom is sexually and scatologically shamed in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*. In his recent edition of Hoccleve's *Series*, Roger Ellis writes of this narratorial intrusion, "An apostrophe without parallel in the analogues, which reinforces Hoccleve's bending of the allegory in the direction of a moral lesson relevant to the first fictional reader"; see Hoccleve, "My *Compleinte*," p. 259, note to lines 432-41.

²² Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 83.

²³ Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 84.

– is even greater.²⁴ Jonathas's profoundly abject state, so necessary in tales of revenge, sets up the considerable force of revenge narrative's dynamics, partially accounting for the genre's lasting appeal. In enabling the rising movement of Jonathas, vengeance functions as a psychic opportunity, a means by which he can forge a heroic masculine identity by engaging a world of risk. The Jonathas who emerges after his abandonment is very different from the Jonathas at the beginning of the tale. No longer manipulated by his paramour, he is methodical, purposeful, and self-controlled. Stranded at the end of the world, he suffers terribly after consuming poisonous fruit and water, but he heals himself when he discovers equally miraculous fruit and water as antidotes. He comes across a magnificent castle and learns that its King suffers from a mysterious malady. Although he sees the severed heads of previously unsuccessful doctors spitted upon pikes, Jonathas accepts the challenge of healing the King, sounding more like a venturesome knight in the world of romance than a fainthearted university student: "fful wel dar I me putte in auenture" (525).²⁵ Although Jonathas's risk is mitigated by his newfound healing objects, his challenge at the castle is no mere university game, for it involves potentially fatal consequences. It is significant that Jonathas's recovery begins in an enchanted land of adventure, for adventure is the "medium in which the moral and martial education of the knight takes place."²⁶ Here the tone and purpose of the poem shift; the poem becomes less about dissuasion (e.g. "Do not let this happen to you") and more about imitation (e.g. "Overcome your shame and weakness like Jonathas"). While Jonathas's discovery of the leprosy-inducing fruit and corrosive water is a painful accident, there is nothing accidental in the way he uses them in his pursuit of revenge. His success as a healer wins him safe passage back home – and back to Fellicula.

With this narrative return to Fellicula, it is appropriate to return to the question of charisma and her character. According to Jaeger's effects 4 and 5, charisma "enlarges the person who possesses it, or some simulation of the person constructed either in the mind of the charismatic person or in the minds of the devotees ... [and] inspires imitation, awakens the urge to be like the charismatic person ..."²⁷ Given Fellicula's cruelty, it may be difficult to see how these particular effects are witnessed in the *Tale of Jonathas*. However, some form of imitation is essential to many prominent revenge narratives, structur-

24 Cf. Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 85.

25 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 234.

26 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 169.

27 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 22-23.

ing the very transference of power that turns victims into avengers. Consider, for example, Shylock's most famous speech in the *Merchant of Venice*. After Shylock's daughter Jessica elopes with the Christian Lorenzo, Shylock resolves to carve his pound of flesh from Antonio's chest. When asked what a pound of a man's flesh is good for, Shylock responds:

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew ... If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (3.1.53-73)

This speech illustrates that, for Shylock, imitation is an essential element of his revenge, perhaps even its most vibrant dimension. In the play, imitation moves from the hypothetical plane of a written contract into an actual physical attempt upon Antonio in a court of law. The loss of Shylock's own figurative flesh – Jessica – will be compensated for by a literal forfeit as Shylock intends to “better the instruction” of a hostile Christian society that took his daughter away.

Retaliatory imitation is central to the processes of disenchantment in Hoccleve's poem, serving as a kind of mirror image of charismatic imitation, and it occurs in multiple male revenge fantasies referenced at the outset of this essay (e.g. Boccaccio, Henryson, Chaucer). The structures of these works are similar enough to facilitate a taxonomy of this genre's recurring features:

1. A sexual experience gap between an experienced female and an inexperienced male.
2. The shaming of the male protagonist.
3. *Peripeteia* or reversal of fortune for the female character, creating a need for the male character.
4. The male protagonist's retaliatory imitation of her abuse of him.

5. The female's recognition and confession of abuse (*anagnōrisis*).²⁸
6. Violent (and often sexualized) punishment of the female character.²⁹

While these features vary from work to work, the role of *peripeteia* – defined by Aristotle in his *Poetics* as a “surprising reversal” – typically catalyzes the protagonist's movement from abject to exalted positions, as well as occasions the imitation that transforms him into an avenger. The kind of peripety that obtains here is something richer than simple role reversal, hinging as it does on fantasies of control and leading to sexualized conclusions. The male protagonist suddenly gains a position of power and control over his shamer and over his former emotional and sexual weakness, and the abusing female's newly abased position seems serendipitously designed to require the male's unique gifts. In Hoccleve's poem, for instance, Jonathas gains his healing abilities just before Fellicula falls conveniently ill:

Now shoop it thus þat this Fellicula–
 The welle of deceyuable doublenesse,
 ffolwere of the steppes of dalida–
 Was thanne exaltat vn-to hy richesse,
 But shee was fallen in-to greet seeknesse,
 And herde seyn for nat mighte it been hid,
 How maistreful a leche he had him kid; (589-95)³⁰

With her newfound weakness, it is as if Fellicula has absorbed all the negative qualities of the formerly weak Jonathas, beginning with his lack of discernment. At the beginning of the narrative, Jonathas was unable to recognize what should have been apparent: that Fellicula was a prostitute intent on manipulating him. By the end of the tale it is Fellicula who is unable to see that the man standing before her is the man whom she had abused long ago: “But

28 *Peripeteia* and *anagnōrisis* are derived from Aristotle's *Poetics* and form part of John Kerrigan's structural analysis of revenge in *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford, 1996), p. 6.

29 Even the figure Jaeger holds up as the charismatic hero *par excellence*, Odysseus, orders Telemachus to mutilate and then hang 12 faithless servant women in Book 22 of the *Odyssey* for sleeping with the suitors and thereby shaming his house. Although Odysseus himself has not been shamed directly by these women, a psychoanalytic reading may view the hanged women as ciphers for other female characters such as Calypso and Circe who had exercised control over him during his journey home.

30 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 237.

what þat he was shee ne wiste nat" (603).³¹ And whereas Jonathas had craved sex, Fellicula's physical desire is more essential: she needs her health restored. In her abject state she becomes foolishly credulous, like the formerly naïve Jonathas, and she believes him when he says that he will heal her if she only trusts him and confesses. The power that "uncouples the critical sense [and] overrides judgment" now belongs to Jonathas; a perverse form of imitation has occurred.

Poised with an opportunity to show mercy and heal Fellicula, or to take vengeance upon her with his fatal fruit and water, Jonathas chooses the latter:

Of the fruyt of the tree he yaf hire ete,
Which þat him made in-to the leepre sterte;
And as blyue in hir wombe gan they frete
And gnawe so þat change gan hire herte.
Now herkneth how it hire made smerte:
Hir wombe opned and out fil eche entraille
That in hire was thus seith the booke sanz fail. (659-65)³²

The first line of the stanza offers a reversal of woman's primal seduction, a punishment for the sexual power Fellicula had exercised over Jonathas as a daughter of Eve. The ensuing violence of the passage is shocking, abruptly narrated, and perhaps even marked by some gallows humor, as the idiomatic "change of heart" here does not refer to Fellicula's newfound sense of remorse, but to her physical dissolution.³³ Just as the audience was previously asked to consider Jonathas's disgrace, we are now rhetorically invited to behold his vengeance: "Now herkneth how it hire made smerte ..." Perhaps only the phrase "thus seith the booke sanz fail" signals some authorial discomfort with these gruesome details. But it is precisely in these gruesome details that we witness the working parts of charisma that lead to disenchantment in male revenge fantasy. In his first chapter, "Charisma and Art," Jaeger details instances of extreme fan worship of pop and rock stars such as David Bowie, drawing upon the research of Fred and Judy Vermorel in *Starlust: The Secret Life of Fans*. These obsessive fans seek to escape into fantasy worlds in which existence is richer, more vibrant, and sexually alive. Such pleasure-seeking illusions might be anticipated. But intense fandom also has its dark side:

³¹ Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 237.

³² Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 239.

³³ The idiom "change of heart" is attested as early as c.1325; *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. "chaunġen 2a."

Starlust records not just hyperreal exaltation, but also a fair amount of ugly aggression directed at the star. The authors/compiler confess their shock at the vehemence. It is often generated by the bursting of the illusion, the realization that the inspirer of blissful dreams is all tinny show, not a god at all. It also takes the form of the fan imagining that the luster of the idol will become his if he kills him. The shooting of John Lennon is one spectacular case. The impulse to destroy, slash, throw acid on, or pound to bits famous works of art can have a similar motive, and this too connects charisma of person and of art.³⁴

This “bursting of the illusion” finds an apt metaphor in the bursting of Fellicula’s womb, just as the violence of the disillusioned fan parallels the violence Jonathas perpetrates against the woman who had once enthralled him and held him in thrall. Although Jaeger’s last sentence describes acts of violence done to art objects, it could just as easily be applied to persons, and especially to women. In our own time, acid attacks have victimized women who have “repelled unwanted offers of marriage or sexual advances.”³⁵ The corrosive water Jonathas uses to rend Fellicula’s womb is a grisly literary precursor to such vitriolage, and with the bursting of Fellicula’s womb, the poem forces us to witness a kind of “gynoclasm” that parallels the iconoclasm described by Jaeger above. The poem’s contemptuous emphasis upon feminine bodiliness is broadened by a strained allegorical moralization common to nearly all *Gesta Romanorum* tales, in which Fellicula is said to symbolize the recalcitrant flesh that must be mortified with the water of contrition and the fruit of penance.³⁶

Though such misogyny is thoroughly conventional in the literature of the Middle Ages, compared to source and analogue materials, Hoccleve’s account of Fellicula’s punishment is uniquely sexualized. Oesterley’s edition of the *Gesta Romanorum* reads, “[E]t cum gustasset et bibisset, statim est arefacta et dolores interiores senciens lacrimabiliter clamavit et spiritum emisit.”³⁷ [“And when she tasted and drank, she was immediately burned and, feeling interior pains, tearfully cried out and sent forth her spirit.”] The Anglo-Latin text edited by Jerome Mitchell is closer to Hoccleve’s description: “Cum autem de fructu comedisset et de aqua bibisset statim corpus eius aperuit et omnia viscera

34 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 18.

35 Kate Wesson, “A Situational Assessment Study of Acid Violence in Bangladesh,” *Development in Practice* 12, no. 1 (2002), 96-100, at p. 97.

36 Hoccleve, *Tale of Jonathas*, p. 241.

37 *Gesta Romanorum*, p. 469.

eius exibant et sic cum angustia magna spiritum traditit.”³⁸ [“And when she ate the fruit and drank the water, immediately her body opened and all her intestines gushed out, and so with great distress she surrendered her spirit.”] The prose version in Harleian 7333 describes the scene as a kind of perverse communion: “[W]henne she hadde resseyvid [the water and fruit], she was in swiche a likenesse, that no man wolde no lenger abide with hir, and in that grete angr she yede up the sprite ...”³⁹ British Library Additional 9066 reads, “And whan she had eten of the frute, and dronken of the watir, anon her bely opened, and all her guttes went out; and so with grete payne she died.”⁴⁰ Thus Hoccleve’s near contemporaries render the Latin *interiores dolores* slightly differently. The Harleian writer stresses the paramour’s loss of physical beauty with the result that no man could stand to be around her – a particular indignity for a woman who traded upon her looks. The other vernacular prose writer is more brutal, suggesting a kind of spontaneous evisceration: “[A]non her bely opened, and all her guttes went out.”⁴¹

Only Hoccleve uses the term *womb* to gloss *dolor interior* or *viscera*. In Middle English the word *womb* had a wide semantic range, often simply meaning “the visceral cavity of the human body.”⁴² Today the word has undergone semantic narrowing to the point that it is almost exclusively used in the context of female sexuality and childbirth, and the *Middle English Dictionary* shows that this meaning was certainly available to Hoccleve: “The human uterus, womb; also *fig.*; specif. the womb of the Virgin Mary; also, the vaginal canal, vagina ...”⁴³ It is this narrower definition that suits the *Tale of Jonathas* best. I do not think it is farfetched to perceive in Fellicula’s destruction a kind

38 Mitchell, “Thomas Hoccleve,” p. 325.

39 Herrtage, *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, p. 193.

40 Herrtage, *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, pp. 192–93.

41 Thomas D. Hill has demonstrated that evisceration in medieval literature is associated with “the punishment of heretics, apostates, and traitors.” Hill cites, *inter alia*, the disembowelment of Bróðir in *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, the similar grisly death of the heretic Arius, Dante’s representation of Mohammed in *Inferno* 28.21–63, the bursting bowels of Error’s children in Spenser’s *Fairie Queene* 1.26, and of course, the death of Judas in Acts 1:18. See Thomas D. Hill, “The Evisceration of Bróðir in *Brennu-Njáls Saga*,” *Traditio* 37 (1981), 437–44, at p. 443. Fellicula’s death also resembles the fate of what Robert Mills has termed “abject anti-bodies” in hagiographical narratives – bodies marked by “corporeal destructibility and distance from the sublime.” See Robert Mills, “Violence, Community and the Materialisation of Belief,” in *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, ed. Sarah Salih (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 87–103, at p. 94.

42 *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “womb 2a.”

43 *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “womb 5a.”

of symbolic rape, a form of penetration and internal destruction. In Fellicula's demise we view a savage punishment reciprocal to her manipulative eroticism, and one may even detect a kind of Dantesque *contrapasso* in the bursting of her womb. This misogynistic violence is a function of Jonathas's disenchantment with Fellicula, illustrating how "charismatic experience gives way to disillusion ... While charisma raises up the viewer, it also creates the greater space to fall: that is the grounding of the disillusioned fan's aggression toward the idol ..."44 The poem violently nullifies Fellicula's power over Jonathas, rendering the once alluring and mysterious to be simply revolting. Fellicula's exposed womb corresponds to Camille Paglia's comments on sex crimes as a means to disclose the "unbearable hiddenness" of the female body – perhaps what captivated a sexually inexperienced Jonathas in the first place:

If sexual physiology provides the pattern for our experience of the world, what is woman's basic metaphor? It is mystery, the hidden ... the anxiety-inducing invisibility of the womb ... Woman is veiled. Violent tearing of this veil may be a motive in gang-rapes and rape-murders, particularly ritualistic disemboweling of the Jack the Ripper kind. The Ripper's public nailing up of his victim's uterus is exactly paralleled in tribal ritual of South African Bushmen. Sex crimes are always male, never female, because such crimes are conceptualizing assaults on the unreachable omnipotence of woman and nature. Every woman's body contains a cell of archaic night, where all knowing must stop.⁴⁵

Paglia's biological essentialism here may be overstated, and Jonathas does not nail up Fellicula's womb for all to see. But Paglia's comments do get at the way in which the *Tale of Jonathas* offers up the literary equivalent of such bloody spectacle – one that seems unnecessarily grisly if its ostensible purpose is simply to warn a 15-year-old boy to avoid loose women.

To this point I have examined aspects of Jaeger's charismatology operative within the *Tale of Jonathas*, looking at how working parts of charisma structure relationships among characters and account for recurring features of revenge narratives themselves, such as disenchantment and misogynistic violence. I would like to conclude this essay by stepping outside the world of the text to consider how aspects of Jaeger's charismatology might help explain Hoccleve's particular interest in this tale and account for its popular longevity.

44 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 44.

45 Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York, 1991), pp. 22-23.

I opened this paper with a caveat: *if we are to believe what Thomas Hoccleve says about his own writing*, because Hoccleve is simultaneously one of the most solipsistic and confessional of all medieval writers. In the *Series*, Hoccleve references his own psychology to a degree unprecedented among medieval English poets. The confessional nature of his work invites inevitable speculation about the man himself, and for our purposes, speculation about why he chose to English the *Tale of Jonathas*. Readers of Hoccleve should approach his autobiographical writing with a healthy degree of skepticism. James Simpson, for example, argues that Hoccleve's exchanges with his "friend" constitute variations on consolation literature tropes as a means to "convince his public, in the person of the friend, that his voice is, in the most essential respects, stable."⁴⁶ D.C. Greetham similarly recognizes literary constructs behind Hoccleve's representation of madness, but he affirms the validity of looking at authorial psychology in Hoccleve's *Series*, even in texts that are not obviously autobiographical:

[S]ince Hoccleve's oeuvre is so much concerned with the problems of melancholy (under that term or another), his narrator is faced with, and advances the same cure for, the disease which engendered Burton's *Anatomy* (i.e. to write about madness in order to avoid going mad)

...

In the *Series* poems, this "thoughtful disease" becomes a primary subject for narrative as well as psychological analysis. Here, Hoccleve's exploitation of a previously created persona is given full license to dominate the work. The self-contained poems ... become in fact really digressions in the portrayal of the poet's psyche. They react to, and are the product of, emotional and psychological disturbances to a far greater degree than are the individual stories in *The Canterbury Tales* ...⁴⁷

A consideration of the *Tale of Jonathas* as a reflex of the "emotional and psychological disturbances" of the author is problematized by the fact that many aspects of character are determined by Hoccleve's Latin source. Nevertheless, we may at least speculate about why Hoccleve was drawn to translate this work, aside from a commissioning frame narrative that may or may not be true.

46 James Simpson, "Madness and Texts: Hoccleve's *Series*," in *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry*, eds. Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen (London, 1991), pp. 15-29, at p. 21.

47 D.C. Greetham, "Self-Referential Artifacts: Hoccleve's Persona as a Literary Device," *Modern Philology* 86, no. 3 (1989), 242-51, at pp. 246-47.

This frame narrative positions the poem as a negative exemplum, a warning to young men to avoid women such as Fellicula. Such a purpose would seemingly set the poem at odds with the kinds of charismatic literature Jaeger discusses in *Enchantment*, works that inspire and enlarge existence, and exemplary "life writing" that stands in for the "longed-for physical presence" of the subject.⁴⁸ In other words, the *Tale of Jonathas* is ostensibly focused on dissuasion, whereas charismatic works typically inspire imitation. Yet as we have seen, the didactic elements of the poem become overwhelmed by the working parts of charisma that animate it; e.g. the alluring object-to-exalted transformation of Jonathas in a romance world of adventure, as well as Jonathas's disenchanting vengeance. Readers may come for the moral, but they stay for the violence.

Perhaps what Hoccleve saw in this tale was the potential for "life writing" of a different sort – a *Gesta Romanorum* narrative that related more to his own anxieties than to any altruistic desire to mentor youth. Perhaps Hoccleve was (consciously or unconsciously) compelled to write Jonathas's life in an effort to restore some internal sense of self. Of literature's role in facilitating such a purpose, Jaeger writes:

Recent theories of cognitive and developmental psychology have claimed the importance of the "narrative construction of the self." Identity gets fashioned via narratives. The process of writing a life narrative is by now entrenched in the practice of therapy in cognitive psychology. Individuals construct their identity by "writing" their own narratives, and they derive a sense of who they are from fictional narrative, their own and others.⁴⁹

With this approach, it is possible to read Hoccleve's writing of Jonathas simultaneously as a "digression in the portrayal of the poet's psyche" as well as an attempt to enlarge his existence through an appeal to a narrative he finds charismatic. Others have probed Hoccleve's psychology more thoroughly than can be attempted in the remaining pages of this essay.⁵⁰ However, a brief look at two Hocclevean works will illustrate some commonalities between Hoccleve's

48 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 352, 64.

49 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 353.

50 In addition to Simpson and Greetham, see Jennifer Bryan, "Hoccleve's Glasses," in *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 176-203; and Ethan Knapp, "Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self in Hoccleve's Formulary and La male regle," *Speculum* 74, no. 2 (1999), 357-76. Knapp expands upon his Hoccleve research in *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA, 2001).

autobiographical obsessions and the preoccupations of Jonathas, suggesting that Jonathas represented for the poet a means to mediate anxieties about feminine power and control, and eradicate them by portraying the violent demise of Fellicula.

Hoccleve writes frankly about his own self-destructive behavior in *La Male Regle* (c.1406), in which he admits to wasting his health and Privy Seal paycheck on tavern revels and Thames water taxis. At the Paul's Head Tavern he frequently caroused with women, treating them to "sweet wyn ... / And wafres thikke" (145-46).⁵¹ Yet even at the Paul's Head there is a Jonathas-like naiveté about his dealings with women, for Hoccleve maintains that a kind of cowardice – not moral compunction – restrained him from pursuing sexual relationships:

Of loues aart yit touchid I no deel;
 I cowde nat, & eek it was no neede:
 Had I a kus I was content ful weel,
 Bettre than I wolde han be with the deede:
 Ther-on can I but small; it is no dreede:
 Whan þat men speke of it in my presence,
 For shame I wexe as reed as is the gleede. (153-59)⁵²

This portrait of a sexually inexperienced young man squandering his resources on wine, women, and song is not unlike the description of Jonathas at university. Of course, Hoccleve's moralizing self-characterization is cliché, and lest we invest too much in it, we should be mindful that *La Male Regle* is ultimately a begging poem that concludes with a request for Lord Fourneval to pay his annual salary of ten pounds.

Less clichéd and formulaic, however, are Hoccleve's comments in his *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*, in which Hoccleve candidly describes his bouts with madness, his "wylde infirmittee" (40), likening his sanity to a pilgrim who goes away for a while and later returns home.⁵³ In this poem, Hoccleve veritably obsesses about what others have said about him during his "braynseek" period, and he is angry and resentful of friends who are skeptical of the long-term prospects of his sanity. Hoccleve even rehearses an imagined dialogue of those speculating on when he would go mad again: "Whan

51 Thomas Hoccleve, *La Male Regle*, in *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, pp. 25-39, at p. 29.

52 Hoccleve, *La Male Regle*, p. 30.

53 Thomas Hoccleve, *Complaint*, in *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. J.A. Burrow (Oxford, 1999), pp. 5, 19.

passyng hete is,' quod they 'trustith this, / Assaile him wole ageyn þat mala-die'" (92-93).⁵⁴ In one remarkable passage from the *Complaint*, Hoccleve says that he was so overcome with melancholy that he had to write in order to feel human:

The greef aboute myn herte so swal
 And bolned euere to and to so sore
 Þat nedes oute I muste therwithal.
 I thoghte I nolde keepe it cloos no more
 Ne lette it in me for to eelde and hore;
 And for to preeue I cam of a womman
 I brast oute on the morwe and thus began. (29-35)⁵⁵

Hoccleve's description of writing as a way "to preeue [he] cam of a womman" depicts poetry as a means of affirming the integrity of the self, and it complements the famous scene of Hoccleve standing in front of a mirror, examining his image for any residual signs of madness, trying desperately to correct them:

And in my chamber at hoom whan þat I was
 Myself allone I in this wyse wroghte:
 I streighte vnto my mirour and my glas
 To looke how þat me of my cheere thoghte,
 If any othir were it than it oghte;
 For fayn wolde I if it had nat been right,
 Amendid it to my konnyng and might. (155-61)⁵⁶

This passage reveals Thomas Hoccleve to be a 15th-century man deeply curious about the workings of his own mind and suffering from a fragmentation of the self that he seeks to ameliorate, in part, through writing. He is a man keenly aware of appearances, trying intently to avoid being laughed at, or gossiped about, or regarded as foolish and unstable. Poetry affords him the opportunity to tell his story and reassure himself of his own integrity. Jaeger's comment about individuals therapeutically constructing a sense of self through writing constitutes a slight variation on Greetham's suggestion of revelation in Hoccleve's non-autobiographical writing – that these "digressions in the portrayal of the poet's psyche" most meaningfully betray unconscious authorial

54 Hoccleve, *Complaint*, p. 9.

55 Hoccleve, *Complaint*, p. 5.

56 Hoccleve, *Complaint*, pp. 14-15.

interests and obsessions. It is an overstatement to say that Hoccleve *is* Jonathas. But Hoccleve's obsessions map well to those of his character, and Hoccleve himself invites us to examine the ways in which his writing works out his battle for sanity with fear and trembling.

The popularity of the *Tale of Jonathas* – its Latin, prose vernacular, and poetic versions, its Renaissance pastoral appropriations and Scandinavian folk retellings – demonstrates that Hoccleve was not alone in responding to this narrative's allure. Indeed, some six centuries of continuous transmission testify to a profound emotional response from readers through the ages. Just as the poem may have done some therapeutic work for the author, it may also have done some work for the people who kept reading it. In male revenge fantasy, villains such as Fellicula perform the vital work of affirming readers' faith in a moral universe, as long as such women suffer terribly in the end. To paraphrase Voltaire, if Fellicula did not exist, it would be necessary to invent her. Of this communal desire for revenge John Carey has written, "We need to feel the sweetness of revenge so constantly that life cannot satisfy our requirements. We have to keep inventing villains, and inventing stories in which vengeance catches up with them, because otherwise we should be starved of a vital part of our moral diet."⁵⁷ With the *Tale of Jonathas*, Hoccleve serves us that proverbial dish best served cold. He feeds us a male revenge fantasy that exhibits many of the working parts of charisma, but one whose female villain is ultimately destroyed by the effects of disenchantment. Yet the continuing readerly fascination with the narrative of Fellicula's bursting womb suggests that, for Hoccleve and his readers, this may have been the most charismatic object of all.

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57 Qtd. in Kerrigan, p. 25.

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The Emperorship of Sigismund of Luxemburg (1410-37): Charisma and Government in the Later Medieval Holy Roman Empire

Duncan Hardy

Introduction: Later Medieval Politics and Culture through the Lens of Charisma

As a concept that relates to the qualities of individuals, in representation or reality, and to their effects on wider groups, “charisma” is potentially a very useful term for late medievalists. Although the word “charisma” itself has rarely been used explicitly in studies of politics and culture in later medieval Europe, recent scholarship in this field has focused increasingly on the roles of key figures in 14th- and 15th-century societies, and the constructions and perceptions of these figures. It is widely accepted amongst later medievalists that successful government depended in many respects on the competence and characteristics, real or imagined, of rulers and political actors. There are many prominent examples of kings whose reigns are considered to have been disruptive phases of crisis because of the personalities of the monarchs themselves. We might think of Henry VI (1421-71), for example, a king of England who was decidedly uncharismatic by any conventional definition of the word, and whose government disintegrated in the face of his inertia;¹ or Charles VI (1368-1422), king of France, whose bouts of insanity created a power vacuum filled by warring princes.² What historians of these familiar examples have highlighted is that the political cultures and structures of these later medieval kingdoms required at least a modicum of vigor and skill on the part of the king in order for the

1 For the argument that the conflicts traditionally called the “Wars of the Roses” arose because the political culture and governmental structure of the English polity could not cope with a weak and inactive personality like Henry VI, see John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996).

2 See Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI: la folie du roi* (Paris, 1986); Bertrand Schnerb, *Les Armagnacs et les Bourguignons: la maudite guerre* (Paris, 1988); Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless: The Growth of Burgundian Power*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge, 2002).

government to be perceived to be exercising power effectively, impartially, and in the interests of the common good.

Equally, later medieval scholarship of recent decades has emphasized the importance of the image of rulers, as depicted in a growing variety of ever more widely diffused media, and as represented in increasingly sophisticated debates about authority and political organization. The 13th to 16th centuries saw an explosion in the reading and writing of texts about the roles and attributes of ideal rulers.³ The genre often categorized as “mirrors for princes” constitutes the most intellectually developed manifestation of this literature, but it is now clear that the participants in discussions about the nature and attributes of authority in a given polity were numerous and varied in this period, and that these discussions took place at many levels.⁴ At the same time, the image projected by rulers and apprehended or constructed by their subjects has long been recognized as integral to their power and legitimacy, especially in the case of those who occupied positions associated with sacral traditions, like kings and emperors.⁵ The mechanisms by which power was mediated within European societies in this period have been studied extensively, and we are now aware of the complex interactions of oral, written, material, and performative means of communication which enabled multilayered dialogue between elites and between rulers and subjects.⁶

3 This is now a commonplace of the textbook literature: see for example Charles F. Briggs, *The Body Broken: Medieval Europe 1300-1520* (London, 2011), pp. 91-95, 102-03.

4 On the political thought of jurists and canonists in general, see Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*, 2nd ed. (London, 2005), chapters 3-4. On mirrors for princes, see Albert Rigaudière, “The Theory and Practice of Government in Western Europe in the Fourteenth Century,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History. Volume VI c.1300-c.1415*, ed. Michael Jones (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 17-41. For the rise of participation in political discussions (and political processes more generally), see, amongst many others, John Watts, *The Making of Politics. Europe, 1300-1500* (Cambridge, 2009), esp. pp. 9, 416.

5 On the construction and representation of sacral monarchy in France, where this scholarship is most developed, see Jacques Krynen, *L'empire du roi: idées et croyances politiques en France, XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris, 1993); *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. Joël Blanchard (Paris, 1995). The foundational work on the dualistic conception of a monarch's person and office remains Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957).

6 The enormous and diverse literatures on these media and modes of communication cannot be summarized here. However, of particular note is work on “pragmatic literacy” in the UK and Germany, which has investigated the intersection of written, oral, and performative practices, often in political contexts. See *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West, 1200-1330*, ed. R.H. Britnell (Woodbridge, 1997); *Pragmatische Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur*, ed. Christel Meier (Munich, 2002); *Zwischen Pragmatik und Performanz: Dimensionen Mittelal-*

Clearly, then, there is now a rich scholarship of politics and culture in later medieval Europe, in which the personalities and traits of political actors have been shown to be important, as have the conventions and rhetorical and material constructions of rulership. This article aims to consider these structural and representational factors in later medieval political culture through the prism of “charisma.” While recent historiography has paid close attention to rulership in the ways outlined above, the term “charisma” itself has rarely been interrogated or deployed in the field of later medieval history.⁷ Yet in both its Weberian formulation and in the recent theoretical work of Stephen Jaeger, this concept brings into focus some of the key mechanisms of political authority in the 14th and 15th centuries. These mechanisms include the performance of power by an individual ruler and his entourage; the dissemination of ideas about a king or emperor’s high status and virtuous characteristics through narratives and material artifacts; and the construction of an imaginary political community united by a shared admiration for and memory of an influential monarchy.

Max Weber understood charisma as a force that created and buttressed the authority (*Herrschaft*) of a ruling figure.⁸ For Weber, charisma equated to an unusual, even magical aura which attracted a following to those individuals perceived to possess it. The Weberian theory of charisma therefore offers a vocabulary for articulating the authority-building effects of sacral kingship and emperorship, particularly as this role was performed in person to audiences of elites and subjects. However, in Weber’s own view the “pure” manifestations of charisma capable of having this effect only existed in “primitive” and ancient societies. Weber considered more sophisticated and institutionalized political structures, such as those present in later medieval Europe, to be antithetical to the elemental functioning of the ideal-typical *Herrschaftsverband* of a charismatic leader.⁹

terlicher Schriftkultur, eds. Christoph Dartmann et al. (Turnhout, 2011). Also noteworthy is the extensive German-speaking scholarship of “symbolic communication.” See especially Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003); *Spektakel der Macht: Rituale im Alten Europa 800-1800*, eds. Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger et al. (Darmstadt, 2008).

7 An exception is the work of Gert Melville, focusing primarily on the charisma of religious leaders. See the recent *Festschrift* dedicated to him: *Institution und Charisma. Festschrift für Gert Melville zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Franz Felten et al. (Cologne, 2009).

8 See Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 1922), chapter III, part 4: “Charismatische Herrschaft” (pp. 140-42).

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 141-25.

By contrast, Stephen Jaeger has offered a theorization of charisma that allows the concept to be deployed across time and space in even the most complex social and cultural contexts.¹⁰ For Jaeger, charisma can be understood as an aesthetic phenomenon that can manifest itself through any number of artistic and literary media. Any representation of an individual that endows him or her with the illusion of “an extraordinary personal presence” can be said to have charismatic force. The effect of this charisma is that onlookers become “enchanted,” and therefore willing to be persuaded or entranced by the individual in question, to the point of obedience and even worship.¹¹ The “enchantment” effect articulated by Jaeger is similar to the process by which later medieval rulers are thought to have influenced their subjects and other elites through stagings and depictions of their authoritative status.¹² In Jaeger’s framework, skillful artifice and performance are central to conjuring this enchanting charismatic force into being. The key technique for this purpose is the achievement of “hypermimesis,” a quality of representation that conveys the impression of an extraordinary personal presence that transcends the realistic and the mundane.¹³ Departing from Weber’s strictly personal definition of charisma, Jaeger argues that artistic or material artifacts can convey hypermimetic representations of people. He also acknowledges that individuals can cultivate a charismatic presence in their personal interactions (through dress, manners and behaviors, and so on) – a notion that has a long history in the scholarship of court cultures in premodern Europe.¹⁴

In the theories of charisma developed by Weber and Jaeger, the late medievalist has a useful analytical tool for considering the importance of rulers’ personalities within the wider operation of political cultures and social structures. The idea of “charisma” as an enchanting influential force strikes at the heart of what later medieval political actors sought to cultivate and achieve in their day-to-day activities, particularly through performative and representational modes of political communication. Understanding charisma as a force experienced both in individual encounters and in a variety of media also challenges the presumed dichotomy between highly personalized, oral and face-to-face styles of rulership and sophisticated and institutionalized political

10 Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 7.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

12 See note 6 above.

13 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 36-38.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9, 24-26; see for example Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione’s Book of the Courtier* (Detroit, 1978).

systems that encompassed large spaces. In much of the later medieval scholarship noted so far, the Weberian opposition of these two repertoires of power – the personal and the institutional – has been implicitly abandoned or overturned. To assert that a king or emperor's persona had an authoritative or integrative effect on his realm is to accept that networks of influential people living within that realm held shared ideas about the benefits of charismatic rulership, including the importance of obeying and sustaining the rule of effective monarchs (often to their own advantage, of course).¹⁵ Such ideas, as we have seen, have been detected in texts, artworks, and rituals, and often these cultural artifacts emanated from political centers, monarchical courts foremost amongst them. In other words, far from being limited to small groups in “primitive” societies, charismatic rulership can be observed in operation within complex socio-cultural and ideological structures and institutions in later medieval Europe.

This article proposes to engage with charisma as a category of analysis by using it as a lens to examine government and political culture in Europe's largest polity, the Holy Roman Empire, under one of its most energetic monarchs, Sigismund of Luxemburg. Following the emphases of the scholarship noted so far, “charisma” is understood here to take into account both the personal characteristics of the central actors in a polity and the ways in which their peers and subjects interacted with them and, more abstractly, with the ideals of authority, hierarchy, and community which these central actors represented and embodied. We shall consider whether Sigismund was able to perform a “charismatic” role in the Weberian and Jaegerian sense, that is, whether he was able to persuade and “enchant” contemporaries to accept and assist his government of the Holy Roman Empire. Gauging the success of Sigismund's charismatic rulership therefore entails a focus on how other elites and subjects responded to him and his administration as much as on the man himself. It also requires an investigation of Sigismund's legacy after his death. Attempts by different groups within German-speaking Europe to draw on the memory of Sigismund (whether as a “real individual” or as an idealized representation in various media) provide insight into the enduring characteristics of charismatic government in the 15th and 16th centuries.

In the later medieval Holy Roman Empire, the role of the monarch was simultaneously more and less important than elsewhere in Europe. It was more important because the Empire was much larger and more disparate than

15 On the “conceptual framework” which emphasized a ruler's character and behavior, shared by many elites and subjects in later medieval Europe, see in particular Watts, *Politics of Kingship*, chapter 2.

realms like England or even France. The German-speaking lands within its borders were ruled by an array of competing powers, including princes, various strata of noblemen and women, episcopal and monastic lords, free and imperial cities, and even minor communes.¹⁶ The Empire therefore consisted of a shifting kaleidoscope of intertwined jurisdictions and networks. The most powerful political actors and entities in the Empire, and many of the smaller and weaker ones, were formally independent of one another, being “immediate to the Empire” (*reichsunmittelbar*). These powers technically recognized no overlord except the Empire’s supreme ruler – the king of the Romans (*rex Romanorum*, *römischer König*; known as the Roman emperor – *imperator*, *Kaiser* – if he had been crowned by a pope in Italy). In a sense, therefore, the only thing that made the Holy Roman Empire something more than just a vast zone filled with notionally autonomous political entities in the 14th and 15th centuries was the monarchy. It is true that the Empire was also conceived as a community of elites, which met at developing institutions like the imperial diet and was tacitly headed by the six German prince-electors.¹⁷ However, the roles and legitimacy of all the elites in the Empire, individually and collectively, were underpinned by the king or emperor, whose notional position at the pinnacle of the imperial polity was never challenged in the 14th and 15th centuries.¹⁸

16 Traditionally, the power-bases of these actors have been characterized as “territories” or “territorial states.” See, for example, Otto Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft: Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Österreichs im Mittelalter*, 5th ed. (Vienna, 1965); *Der deutsche Territorialstaat im 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans Patze, 2 vols. (Sigmaringen, 1970-71); Karl Siegfried Bader, *Der deutsche Südwesten in seiner territorialstaatlichen Entwicklung*, 2nd ed. (Ostfildern, 1995). For a nuanced view of these power bases, including a critique of the overly neat territorial categories that have shaped German scholarship, see Ernst Schubert, *Fürstliche Herrschaft und Territorium im späten Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 2006).

17 On the imperial diet and its development in this period, see Gabriele Annas, *Hoftag – Gemeiner Tag – Reichstag: Studien zur strukturellen Entwicklung deutscher Reichsversammlungen des späten Mittelalters (1349-1471)*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2004). Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1997), remains an important overview of the communitarian dynamics in medieval “regal polities.”

18 On the importance of the crown as the theoretical, and sometimes practical, apex of the Holy Roman Empire’s socio-political hierarchy, see Peter Moraw, “Die Verwaltung des Königtums und des Reiches und ihre Rahmenbedingungen,” in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte. Band 1. Vom Spätmittelalter bis zum Ende des Reiches*, ed. Kurt G.A. Jeserich et al. (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 22-65; Idem, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung: das Reich im späten Mittelalter, 1250 bis 1490* (Berlin, 1985); Karl Friedrich Krieger, *König, Reich und Reichsreform im Spätmittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 2005). Note that in the 20th- and

Fulfilling the functions of monarchical government in the enormous area of Central Europe encompassed by the Empire was no easy task. The crown of the Romans had relatively few administrative and financial resources. It was also an elective office, and it therefore passed regularly between dynasties and power bases.¹⁹ Nonetheless, if they hoped to give any substance to the idea of the Holy Roman Empire as a polity, kings and emperors had to make as much use as they could of the tools at their disposal in order to engage with the multitude of powers in the Empire. It is often asserted that the idea of a Christian Romano-German *imperium* was dead by this period, and that the under-resourced kings and emperors of the Romans were incapable of reanimating it. In his famous survey of 14th- and 15th-century Europe, Bernard Guenée put it rhetorically: “How can one deny, in these circumstances, that at the end of the Middle Ages, even in Germany, the Empire is nothing but a ghost?”²⁰ We shall see by reference to Sigismund of Luxemburg’s reign that monarchs capable of performing the charismatic persona of a Roman king or emperor, both in person and in a variety of media, could “enchant” peers and subjects, sustaining the idea of the Empire amongst them with minimal resources.

At the same time, the monarchy was in some respects less important to political life in the Holy Roman Empire than in other European realms. Many of the constituent parts of the Empire were so remote from the lands of the holder of the crown that the monarch had little effect on their practical functioning. The *reichsunmittelbar* princes, bishops, abbots, margraves, counts, knights, and cities were all endowed with at least a degree of governmental self-sufficiency. These fragmented powers were often in conflict with one another, but they also co-operated in order to carry out some basic tasks of government in their localities. For instance, they collaborated within leagues and associations for peace-keeping, mutual defense, arbitration, the maintenance of coinage quality, or the streamlining of jurisdictions.²¹ The size and

early 21st-century German historiography of the Empire, its organization/political framework is referred to as an “imperial constitution” (*Reichsverfassung*).

19 A useful summary of the situation of the king/emperor’s government in the 13th to 16th centuries is Moraw, “Die Verwaltung des Königtums.” See also Len Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245-1414* (Cambridge, 2012), chapter 2.

20 “Comment nier dans ces conditions qu’à la fin du Moyen Age, même en Allemagne, l’Empire n’est plus qu’un fantôme?” Bernard Guenée, *L’Occident aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles: Les Etats* (Paris, 1971; repr. 1993), p. 74.

21 Heinz Angermeier, *Königtum und Landfriede im deutschen Spätmittelalter* (Munich, 1966); Duncan Hardy, “Reichsstädtische Bündnisse als Beweise für eine ‘verbündende’ politische Kultur am Oberrhein (c.1350-1500),” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 142 (2014), 95-128.

fragmentation of the Empire forced its elites to act on their own initiative and work out regional solutions geared towards everyday political needs, and therefore to acquire substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the monarchy. In this sense the monarch was potentially less important than in a more consolidated polity. Kings and emperors who lacked suitably charismatic and energetic personalities risked being cast aside or reduced to irrelevance. Indeed, Sigismund of Luxemburg's half-brother, the remote and inactive King Wenceslas of the Romans and Bohemia, who remained in Prague for most of his reign in the Empire (1376-1400), was ultimately deposed by an alliance of the four Rhenish prince-electors on the grounds that he had failed to fulfil the characteristics and requirements of a Roman king.²² Declaring Wenceslas to be "an unprofitable, neglectful, disreputable dismemberer and unworthy governor of the Holy Roman Empire" in their articles of deposition,²³ the electors replaced him with one of their own, Rupert of the Palatinate (r. 1400-10).

Thus, the monarch had to be charismatic in two important respects. Charisma enabled him to function as a focal point for the political elite, ensuring their loyalty and participation through his exalted and "enchanting" persona, and thereby sustaining a vision of a Holy Roman Empire which was more than the sum of its parts. Persuasive charismatic force was also needed to prevent that same elite from governing on its own terms and running the localities without reference to the crown. It is in the context of the relationship between the crown and other elites in the Empire that "charisma" worked as a force for political attraction and the reinforcement of power. The remainder of this article will analyze the facets and mechanisms of the charisma of Sigismund of Luxemburg, and the way in which it shaped his government in the Empire during his reign. It will also examine his charismatic image, and the idea of the Romano-German *imperium* manifested by that charisma, after his death. First we will analyze charisma as a personal, direct force, which subjects of the Empire experienced when they encountered Sigismund face to face. We will then consider charisma as a projected, indirect phenomenon, whereby its persuasive power was mediated through objects and instruments like documents, seals, and portraits, and expressed in ideologies and discourses within which Sigismund, and the office he held, took on particular meanings.

22 See the alliance and the articles of deposition in *Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Ältere Reihe*, eds. Julius Weizsäcker et al., 22 vols. (Munich, Gotha, and Göttingen, 1876-2013), 3:245-66.

23 "eynen unnu^eczen versu^emelichen unachtbaren entglieder und unwerdigen hanthaber des heiligen Romischen richs." *Ibid.*, 3:258.

Sigismund of Luxemburg: The Charismatic Ruler in His Lifetime

Sigismund was born in 1368 into the Central European house of Luxemburg.²⁴ He died in 1437 as the final male member of that dynasty, having borne six royal titles: Sigismund acceded as king of Hungary, Croatia, and Dalmatia in 1387; he was elected king of the Romans in 1411; he acquired the crown of Bohemia, nominally, in 1420; and he was crowned Roman emperor by Pope Eugenius IV in Rome in 1433. As such, Sigismund formed the central node in several sprawling elite networks extending from the Low Countries to the Balkans. He was therefore uniquely reliant on the attractive and persuasive force of monarchical charisma. The challenges presented by the imperative to govern such vast and disparate political spaces were compounded by several interrelated crises which affected many of Sigismund's realms between the late 14th and the mid-15th century. The Holy Roman Empire and Europe more generally were divided by competing religious allegiances during the papal schisms of 1378 to 1417 and 1438 to 1449. Hungary and Upper Germany were wracked by wars and factional conflicts in the 1380s, '90s, and 1400s. More acute still was the upheaval faced by Bohemia, which was plunged into an exceptionally violent series of conflicts between the Hussites and their enemies from the 1410s onwards.²⁵ Five crusades launched by Sigismund, the electors, and papal legates between 1420 and 1431 failed to defeat the Hussites, and Sigismund's claim to the crown of Bohemia was not widely recognized within the kingdom itself until 1436. Against this troubled backdrop, Sigismund seems to have had an impressively large reach and influence, notwithstanding numerous setbacks. He managed more or less to maintain the cohesion of the Empire and at times took a leading role in navigating it through myriad crises, not least by overseeing the resolution of the Western Schism at the Council of Constance (1414-18), despite acceding in dire circumstances and with limited financial resources.²⁶

Perhaps because the events and configurations of Sigismund's lifetime are so complex, and his varied career does not fit neatly within the confines of nationalistic historiographies, scholarly engagement with his life and government was minimal until recently, especially outside of Hungary. After the pub-

24 See Jörg K. Hoensch, *Die Luxemburger. Eine spätmittelalterliche Dynastie gesamteuropäischer Bedeutung 1308-1437* (Stuttgart, 2000).

25 On the Hussites see Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967); František Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 3 vols. (Hannover, 2002).

26 See esp. Walter Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Konstanz, 1414-1418*, 2 vols. (Paderborn, 1991-97).

lication of Joseph von Aschbach's four-volume biography of Sigismund in 1838-45,²⁷ few substantial studies of the Luxemburg monarch were produced until a century and a half later.²⁸ The last three decades have seen a rapid increase in research on Sigismund, with particular focus on his political and diplomatic *modus operandi*.²⁹ In investigating Sigismund's "practice of authority" (*Herrschaftspraxis*), recent scholarship has drawn on many of the approaches highlighted at the start of this article: a close attention to the roles and competences of the monarch as an individual, an interest in material culture, performativity, and gender alongside more traditional themes in political history, and an emphasis on the ways in which power was mediated through culturally specific codes of behavior and meaning.³⁰

One clear finding of this research is that Sigismund cultivated the idea of what might be called the charismatic role of the king or emperor of the Romans with all the ritual, emotional, and material modes and means at his disposal. In large part this powerful role was performed at a distance, and received indirectly by remote elites who bought into the idea of the Empire through an array of representative media. First, however, it should be noted that Sigismund seems to have made a profound personal impression on those who encountered him and recorded their experiences. Even allowing for the tendentious nature of most of the accounts of him which survive, he appears to have striven to meet the expectations of a successful charismatic monarch, performing the kind of persona that might "enchant" interlocutors and onlookers in the

27 Joseph von Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmunds*, 4 vols. (Hamburg, 1838-45).

28 An overview of this literature, as well as all subsequent work up to 2012 (encompassing German, Austrian, Czech, and Hungarian scholarship), is provided in Karel Hruza, "Einleitung," in *Kaiser Sigismund. Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen (1368-1437)*, eds. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Cologne, 2012), pp. 13-20.

29 This article has relied in particular on Sabine Wefers, *Das politische System Kaiser Sigmunds* (Stuttgart, 1989); *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa 1387-1437. Beiträge zur Herrschaft Kaiser Sigismund und der europäischen Geschichte um 1400*, eds. Josef Macek, Ernő Marosi, and Ferdinand Seibt (Warendorf, 1994); Jörg K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund: Herrscher an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit, 1368-1437* (Munich, 1996); *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Ein Kaiser in Europa*, eds. Michel Pauly and François Reinert (Mainz, 2006); *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigmunds von Luxemburg 1387-1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Mainz, 2006) (museum catalogue for an exhibition about the age of Sigismund in Budapest and Luxembourg); *Kaiser Sigismund*, eds. Hruza and Kaar; Mark Whelan, "Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat, c. 1410-1437" (doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2014).

30 See the essays in *Kaiser Sigismund*, eds. Hruza and Kaar. See also notes 44-48 below.

manner theorized by Stephen Jaeger.³¹ In the view of Jörg Hoensch, the author of Sigismund's most complete biography in recent years, "[t]he king/emperor conformed to the medieval ideal-type of a monarch, otherwise his likeness would not have been worked into so many biblical and secular historical paintings."³² Contemporary verdicts appear to confirm this. As one chronicler from what is now Switzerland, who saw the king at Constance in the 1410s, put it, "he [Sigismund] has a noble, kingly, lordly guise ... wherever he walked, there the poor and the rich alike were in his thrall."³³ Despite his chronic shortness of money, Sigismund always appeared in the most expensive and splendid clothing available, and took every opportunity to perform his elevated socio-political rank – a trait which attracted criticism from those who experienced his spending habits, like the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini.³⁴ Thomas Ebendorfer, a Viennese academic who came to know Sigismund in Basel during the 1430s, portrayed him as a model of monarchical generosity and magnanimity, but, like Aeneas Silvius, noted that this came at the price of wasteful extravagance, and resulted in many unfulfilled financial engagements.³⁵ Several commentators remarked favorably upon Sigismund's competence as an orator and negotiator at the imperial diets and the ecclesiastical councils at Constance and Basel.³⁶ There is little doubt that Sigismund had a gift for persuasive speech – surely an essential aspect of personal charisma – even if his enemies were quick to point out his propensity for forgetting the grand promises he made. This was certainly the impression of the chronicler of the noble Klingenberg dynasty, who was poorly disposed towards the king of the Romans because his patrons were partisans of Duke Friedrich IV of Austria-Tyrol, whom Sigismund placed under the imperial ban and dispossessed in 1415:

[T]his king was a lord of good words, he could say what everyone wanted to hear; he bade, gave, counselled, and promised much to which he did

31 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 9.

32 "Der König/Kaiser hat dem mittelalterlichen Idealtypus eines Monarchen entsprochen, sonst wäre sein Abbild nicht so häufig in biblische und weltliche Historiengemälde eingearbeitet worden." Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 482.

33 "er hatt ain adeliche küngliche herliche gestalt ... wo er wandlet, da warent jm arm und rich hold." *Klingenberger Chronik*, ed. Anton Henne (Gotha, 1861), pp. 208-09.

34 Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 482-87; see Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomineus, *qui postea Pius II. P. M., De viris illustribus* (Stuttgart, 1842), p. 65.

35 Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 488.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 484.

not hold, and he was not ashamed of this ... His words were sweet, lenient, and good, and his works were short, meagre, and small.³⁷

It seems that Sigismund stopped at nothing to maintain the image expected of the ruler of the Empire and (theoretically) of the Christian world, however limited his practical resources. Even where this risked causing diplomatic incidents, Sigismund sought to act out his position of exalted authority in his encounters with others. When he visited Paris in 1416, for example, he insisted on being seated on a throne as the foremost lord in attendance. Sigismund even took the unprecedented step of chairing a session of the *parlement* of Paris and rendering judgments in the disputes brought before it that day.³⁸ Eberhard Windeck, a merchant from Mainz who spent over two decades in Sigismund's service and wrote an account of his career, claimed – probably with some exaggeration – that the monarch's performance of his lofty status earned him the sobriquet "*lux mundi*, that is, a light of the world."³⁹

Of course, care must be taken when trying to reconstruct Sigismund's personality and behavior from these varied accounts, all of which were shaped by different literary styles, intended audiences, and agendas. Even those illustrated chronicles covering Sigismund's reign which were once held to be faithful eyewitness accounts, such as the work of Eberhard Windeck and the "Chronicle of the Council of Constance" of Ulrich von Richental,⁴⁰ have been reassessed. Through critical and comparative readings of these texts, it has been shown that the authors of such narratives were attuned to their audiences' preconceptions about what constituted an ideal ruler, and exaggerated the traits of Sigismund to match these expectations.⁴¹ The "real" Sigismund, as an individual, cannot be accessed straightforwardly through these portrayals.

37 "diser künig was ain her von guoten worten, er kond reddē was jederman gern hort; er gehiess, er gab, er rett und versprach vil und menges der er kainz hielt, und schampt sich des nüt ... Sine wort warent suess, milt und guot, die werk kurz, schmal und klain." *Klingenberger Chronik*, ed. Henne, pp. 208-09.

38 *Sigismundus*, ed. Takács, pp. 491-93.

39 "lux mundi, das ist ein liecht der werlt." *Eberhart Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Berlin, 1893), pp. 1-2.

40 *Ibid.*; *Chronik des Konstanzer Konzils 1414-1418 von Ulrich Richental*, ed. Thomas Martin Buck (Stuttgart, 2010).

41 See Joachim Schneider, "Herrschererinnerung und symbolische Kommunikation am Hof König Sigmunds. Das Zeugnis der Chronik des Eberhard Windeck," in *Kaiser Sigismund*, eds. Hruza and Kaar, pp. 429-48; Martin Roland, "Was die Illustrationen zu Eberhard Windecks Sigismundbuch präsentieren, was man dahinter lesen kann und was verborgen bleibt," in *ibid.*, pp. 449-66.

However, both Richental and Windeck devoted many passages to the public ceremonies which they, and many others, had witnessed, in order to focus attention on the monarch as a performatively constructed “ruler who stands at the centre of the Empire and personifies it.”⁴² While we must be cautious about assuming that we can learn much about Sigismund’s personality, these ritual occasions, which are corroborated by external evidence like the records of the towns in which they took place, tell us much about the staging (*Inszenierung*, as scholars of symbolic communication call it) of charismatic kingship and emperorship.⁴³

Sigismund was an adept *metteur en scène*, and a variety of sources attest to the impressive displays that he orchestrated of his association with the idea of supreme imperial monarchy and its archetypal attributes. In taking every opportunity to act out his office – royal entries, ceremonies of liege-homage and privilege-granting, tournaments, and orations – Sigismund “reactivated the old charisma of Roman kingship,” as Joachim Schneider recently put it.⁴⁴ By arranging for the well-attended ecclesiastical councils of 1414-18 and 1431-49 to be held in imperial cities (Constance and Basel) at crucial junctures in his reign, Sigismund guaranteed a broad audience for these performances of charismatic power, ranging from German noblemen and merchants to cardinals and ambassadors from all the major polities in Europe.⁴⁵ A representative example, illustrated in Richental’s chronicle, is the enfeoffment of the dukes of Bavaria-Munich by Sigismund before a large audience at Constance in 1417 (fig. 9.1).⁴⁶ As Gerrit Jasper Schenk has argued, the Council of Constance can be understood as a kind of imperial diet or assembly when Sigismund was present, so, as at other diets, the king sought to display and bring into being the idea of the Holy Roman Empire, with him at its pinnacle, through ritual occa-

42 “der als Herrscher im Zentrum des Reichs steht und dieses personifiziert.” Schneider, “Windeck,” p. 447.

43 On the predominantly German scholarship of ritual and symbolic communication, see note 6 above.

44 “das alte Charisma des römischen Königtums reaktiviert[e].” Joachim Schneider, “Sigismund. Römisch-deutscher König auf dem Konstanzer Konzil,” in *1414-1418. Weltereignis des Mittelalters. Das Konstanzer Konzil. Essays*, eds. Karl-Heinz Braun et al. (Stuttgart, 2013), pp. 41-46 (at p. 46).

45 On international encounters at the councils, see Jürgen Miethke, “Die Konzilien im 15. Jahrhundert als Drehscheibe internationaler Beziehungen,” in *Zwischen Habsburg und Burgund. Der Oberrhein als europäische Landschaft im 15. Jahrhundert*, eds. Konrad Krimm and Rainer Brüning (Ostfildern, 2003), pp. 257-74.

46 On this and other rituals at Constance see Gerrit Jasper Schenk, “Zeremonielle und Rituale auf dem Konstanzer Konzil,” in *1414-1418*, eds. Braun et al., pp. 22-27.



FIGURE 9.1 Sigismund, in full imperial regalia, enfeoffs the dukes of Bavaria-Munich in 1417, as depicted in a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript of Ulrich von Richental's chronicle (c.1420). Rosgartenmuseum Konstanz, Ulrich Richental; *Chronik des Konstanzer Konzils Hs 1, fol. 77*. USED WITH PERMISSION.

sions.⁴⁷ The imperial insignia – the crown, supposedly of Charlemagne, and the orb and scepter of office – were displayed prominently so as to emphasize the supreme authority and control of the monarch. To these were added an innovation which is thought to be Sigismund's own invention.⁴⁸ The sword, the symbol of secular justice, was not merely held alongside the other insignia, but was borne above his head, resting in his crown. Through this hypermimetic *mise en scène*, in which the imperial sword of office literally pointed at the monarch's head, Sigismund emphasized himself as the bearer of the ancient charisma of the Holy Roman Empire, in whose person Romano-Christian tradition and present authority in the world were fused. These enfeoffments, like many other rituals at Constance, took place in the “upper market” of the city, a public space which maximized the potential size of the audience; Richental noted that even “the houses which offered a view onto it ... were full of people.”⁴⁹ This symbolic staging of the Holy Roman Empire, embodied by its charismatic monarch and a supporting cast of German princes, evidently exerted an attractive influence on those present in Constance at the time. The “enchancing” effect such rituals had on their audiences must have increased the willingness of the imperial elites to participate in the scenes staged by Sigismund, even though these scenes emphasized his charismatic pre-eminence and authority above that of all other participants. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that these performances had meaningful outcomes. There is a general consensus that the 1410s were a time of success for Sigismund, especially as his imposing presence in Constance, the Empire, and Western Europe forced the divided political actors around him to reach an agreement on the papal succession and bring an end to four decades of schism in the Roman Church.⁵⁰

Another means by which “charisma” took effect as an integrative force in the Empire, in connection with Sigismund's constructed persona, was through the diffusion of texts and objects which bore his name or image. Coins and seals, for instance, could be used to convey messages about the centrality of Sigismund to the imperial polity in much the same way as staged rituals, and to much broader and more distant audiences.⁵¹ Sigismund seems to have taken a

47 Ibid., p. 23.

48 Werner Paravicini, “Das Schwert in der Krone,” in *Institution und Charisma*, eds. Felten et al., pp. 279-304.

49 “an dem obern markt” “die hüser, so da hin gesehen mochten ... waren vollen lüt.” *Chronik des Konstanzer Konzils*, ed. Buck, p. 91.

50 Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Konstanz, 1414-1418*, *passim*.

51 On the iconographic program of Sigismund see Bertalan Kéry, *Kaiser Sigismund. Ikono-graphie* (Vienna, 1972).

personal interest in the production of artifacts which projected these messages. His imperial seal (fig. 9.1), developed around 1417, was based on the familiar figure of the monarch seated in majesty popularized by his father Charles IV, which had reached the far corners of Central Europe appended to documents from his prolific chancery. Sigismund's chancery was more prolific still – indeed, proportionate to the length of his reign, he issued more charters and privileges than any other later medieval Roman monarch.⁵² This widely-travelled seal also displayed some innovations. The double-headed eagle (*Doppeladler*) on the reverse, for instance, was a symbol of universal imperial authority that Sigismund specifically fostered, and thereafter the motif gained popularity and ubiquity in the course of the 15th century.⁵³ The image of Sigismund on the obverse was not only surrounded by the heraldry of five of the monarch's kingdoms and lordships (the Empire, Bohemia, Hungary, and Luxembourg), but also featured the insignia of the Order of the Dragon, a transnational chivalric network founded by Sigismund in 1408. The *Registraturbücher* of Constance note the commissioning of the mold for this seal from a Netherlandish jeweler, one “Arnoldus de Bomel,” with a detailed specification, apparently produced by Sigismund himself.⁵⁴ The charisma-projecting technique of hypermimesis was at work in all the elements of this imperial seal. The eagle and majestic throne imbued the figure of Sigismund with the almost otherworldly charisma of universal power, passed down from Roman antiquity and sanctioned by God – a point reinforced by the standard *intitulatio* in imperial documents, “Sigismund, by the grace of God king of the Romans, eternal augments of the Empire ...”⁵⁵ The five coats of arms surrounding Sigismund's throne highlighted the unusual extent to which this particular monarch's authority was based on vast pan-European domains, anchoring the ethereal aspirations of universal government in a specific dynast. All in all, Sigismund's chancery staff drew on the central techniques of charismatic art, playing on what Jaeger calls “the particular relationship of a perceived authority of the image or text and its successful assertion of influence on the viewer,” to project an unambiguous statement of supreme rulership.⁵⁶

52 See “11. Urkunden und Briefproduktion Sigismunds,” in *Kaiser Sigismund*, ed. Hruza and Kaar, pp. 215-364.

53 Claus D. Bleisteiner, “Der Doppeladler von Kaiser und Reich im Mittelalter,” in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 109 (2001), 4-52.

54 *Sigismundus*, ed. Takács, pp. 186-87.

55 E.g. “Sygimund von gots gnaden Romischer konig zu^e allen ziten merer des richs.” *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, eds. Weizsäcker et al., 7:53.

56 See Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 5, 38-42.

Similar attention to charismatic imagery seems to have been paid to Sigismund's judicial seal (fig. 9.3), which also displayed an idealized vision of the ruler – with his characteristic forked beard – bearing the imperial crown and scepter and the sword of secular justice. As in the rituals in which Sigismund and his entourage deployed this imperial accoutrement in person, the sword and scepter served a hypermimetic purpose. They enhanced the charisma of Sigismund's persona by symbolically elevating him from the status of a mere temporal lord who happened to rule certain lands to that of the highest secular authority in Christendom, whose jurisdiction theoretically transcended all other powers. As this seal was used by Sigismund's *Hofgericht* (aulic court), which operated in his absence via networks of local actors such as the counts of Montfort-Tettnang,⁵⁷ it enjoyed wide circulation. Even more impressive are the “golden bulls” – gold-plated seals with images of Sigismund seated in majesty – which adorn some of the privileges issued by the Luxemburg monarch's chancery (fig. 9.4).⁵⁸ Few objects so clearly transmitted, visually and materially, the ideals of charismatic imperial monarchy, especially given that they came attached to texts which legitimized the position of local actors by reference to the traditional authority of the Empire and its sovereign. Sigismund seems to have deployed these prestigious adornments to encourage the loyalty of his key supporters – especially the imperial cities – and for documents which might increase his influence in the localities, such as a 1432 privilege for a league of knightly societies in Upper Germany under the aegis of his Upper Rhenish and Swabian agents in the middling and lower nobility.⁵⁹

These representations of Sigismund and the symbols of the Empire are especially significant since the diverse elites of Central Europe were keen consumers and collectors of these visual and material artifacts. Although a number of factors probably motivated Sigismund's subjects to obtain products from the imperial chancery – not least the need to legitimize their own local authority – their keenness does suggest that the use of charismatic imagery could make a concrete difference to day-to-day imperial government, especially considering the acceleration of document production during Sigismund's reign.⁶⁰ The charismatic media produced by the chancery were invariably funded by other actors, who then voluntarily disseminated these media in their localities. This was a crucial dynamic for a monarch like Sigismund, who lacked the resources to make his presence felt directly within the vast areas under his no-

57 Archives Municipales de Haguenau AA53.

58 *Sigismundus*, ed. Takács, pp. 185–88, 3.17, 3.19a–b.

59 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 46/1689.

60 See note 52 above.



FIGURE 9.2
Sigismund's imperial seal, appended to a 1436 document issued by his chancery (Archives Municipales de Haguenau, AA 54) (PHOTO: AUTHOR).



FIGURE 9.3
Sigismund's judicial seal, appended to a 1436 document issued by his aulic court (Archives Municipales de Haguenau, AA 53) (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

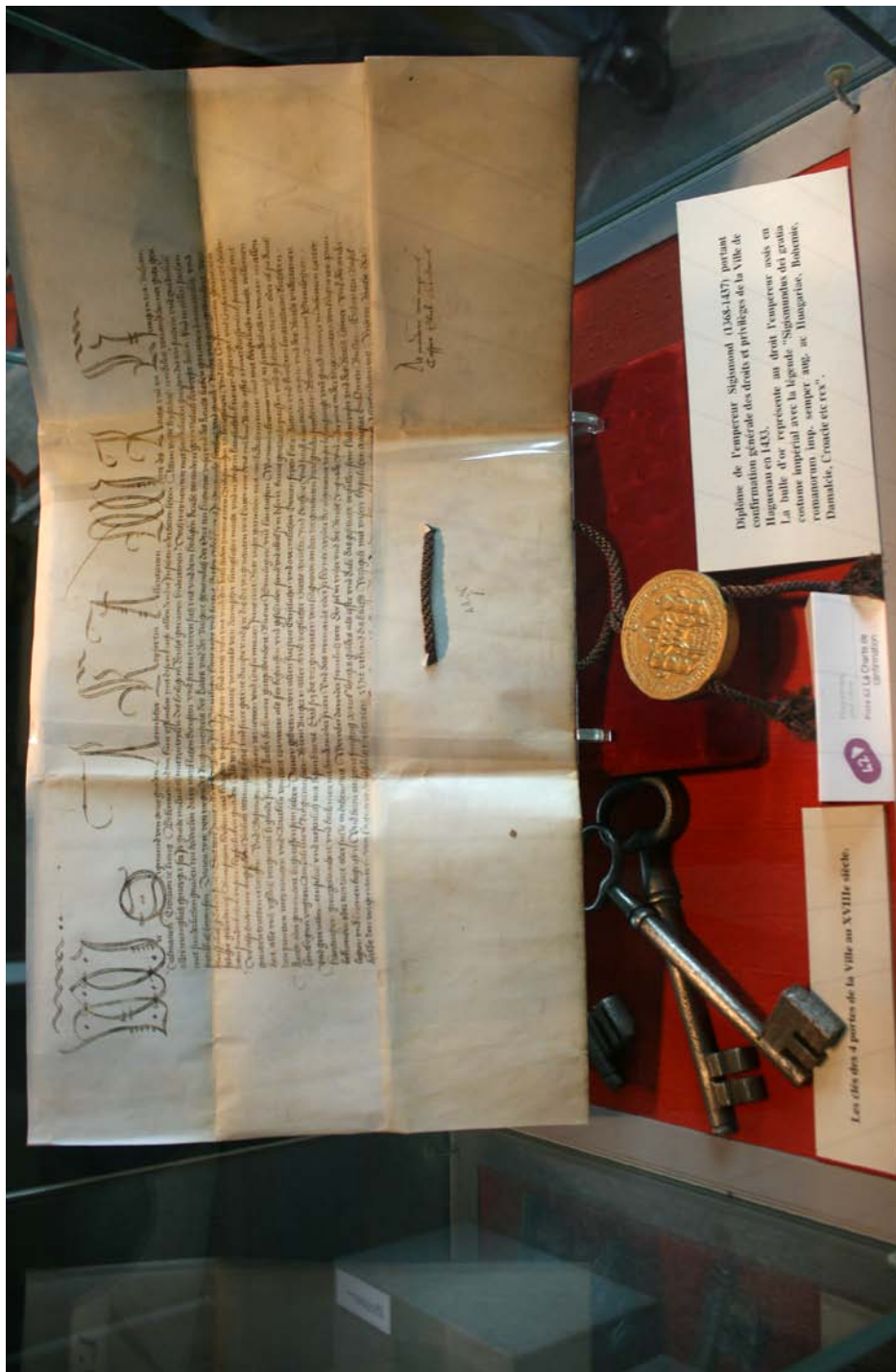


FIGURE 9.4 Privilege-charter issued by Sigismund's chancery to the imperial city of Haguenau in 1433, displaying a 'golden bull' (Archives Municipales de Haguenau, AA 50) (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

tional authority. For instance, it was local powers (towns, nobles, and so on) which paid for messengers to travel to wherever Sigismund's peripatetic chancery was located, and they paid large sums for all of the materials involved in making the charters of privileges they received there. Nuremberg's records indicate that in 1433 the municipal government sent two councilors to Rome, where Sigismund was located, and that they paid 200 ducats for 14 privilege-charters and eight golden bulls, 40 ducats in order to have these bulls manufactured by a goldsmith, "and 50 ducats as a tip for the scribes in the chancery."⁶¹ A document preserved in the Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe shows that half of the cost of the golden bull for the 1432 royal endorsement of the league of Upper German knights was provided by the members of the knightly Society of St. George's Shield.⁶² This dynamic is crucial for conceptualizing Sigismund's rule in the Empire. While he himself was frequently occupied in Hungary, the Balkans, and elsewhere – times when his personal qualities and staged rituals had little impact on his government in Central Europe – the integrative power of the idea of his imperial authority, i.e. his charisma in this context, remained active through the intermediary of an array of charismatic texts and objects which were enthusiastically circulated throughout the Holy Roman Empire.⁶³

Sigismund's Charismatic Afterlife: The Idealized Emperor in the 15th- and 16th-Century Holy Roman Empire

Before concluding this investigation of the place of charisma in our understanding of Sigismund's government, it is worth considering the significance of the many texts and objects which commemorated or invoked his rule in the decades after his death. More than any other later medieval king or emperor of the Romans, Sigismund – as a memory and as an archetype – became a byword for the charismatic authority of the imperial monarchs. His name and his familiar traits (a tall figure, often in the imperial regalia, with a long, sometimes forked beard) encapsulated and embodied the justice and order which the Holy Roman Empire represented, at least in the rhetoric of some 15th- and

61 "und 50 ducaten den schreibern in der cantzley zu trinkgelt." *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte. Nürnberg. Erster Band*, ed. Karl Hegel (Leipzig, 1862), pp. 451-52.

62 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 46/1689.

63 On the "bottom-up" desire to engage with artifacts which evoked the Empire, see Len Scales, "The Illuminated Reich: Memory, Crisis and the Visibility of Monarchy in Late Medieval Germany," in *The Holy Roman Empire, Reconsidered*, eds. Jason Coy et al. (New York and Oxford, 2010), pp. 73-92.

16th-century elites. This is clear, for example, in the decision of an anonymous conciliarist cleric writing around 1439 at the Council of Basel to name his vernacular manifesto for the reform of the church and the Empire “Reformacion keyser Sigmunds” (“the Reformation of Emperor Sigismund,” or *Reformatio Sigismundi*). The text broadly calls for an end to regional autonomy and disorder and the (re-)creation of an impartial, centralized government under the aegis of the Roman emperor. It begins with the claim that its proposals came to Sigismund (who had been dead for two years at this point) in a spiritual vision, and that he then fashioned these into an ordinance (“ein ordenunge”) in collaboration with the Council of Basel.⁶⁴ Modified manuscripts of the “Reformacion,” which took at face value the attribution to Sigismund, enjoyed a wide circulation from the 1440s, and many printed editions were in existence by the end of the 15th century. The text was often grouped with legal ordinances (the 1356 “Golden Bull” of Charles IV and the 1442 “Reformation” of Frederick III), which suggests that it was regarded as an authentic and desirable set of regulations.⁶⁵ That the Baslean author thought that Sigismund’s name would lend weight to his ideas, and that his text did indeed enjoy enormous success, is a testament to the enduring appeal of the figure of Sigismund, whose name alone evoked the charismatic ideal of a rejuvenated, effective imperial government presided over by a powerful and just monarch.

Equally notable is the large number of chronicle accounts written in the 15th and 16th centuries which recall the years of Sigismund’s rule as a time of good monarchical government, despite the political and ecclesiastical crises of the years between 1410 and 1437. We have already encountered the adulatory narratives of Windeck and Richental, in which Sigismund incarnated the charismatic ideal of imperial rulership in descriptive passages that portrayed him with hypermimetic characteristics. To these could be added numerous shorter references which present similar depictions, to less self-serving ends. Such references are particularly common in town chronicles, from the compiled chronicle of Bern (c.1422–84)⁶⁶ in the south-west to the *Rathsannalen* of Görlitz (c.1509–42)⁶⁷ in the north-east. The latter were written over several decades by Johannes Haß, councilor and mayor of Görlitz, who still noted with approval the activities of “the great and mighty unconquerable prince and lord, lord

64 *Monumenta Germaniae historica 500–1500. Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters*. VI. Band. *Reformation Kaiser Siegmunds*, ed. Heinrich Koller (Stuttgart, 1964), p. 51.

65 See the editor’s introduction in *ibid.*, pp. 1–49.

66 *Die Berner-Chronik des Conrad Justinger*, ed. G. Studer (Bern, 1871), p. II.

67 *Scriptores rerum Lusaticarum. Sammlung ober- und niederlausitzischer Geschichtschreiber, Neue Folge*, 4 vols. (Görlitz, 1839–70), 2, 3.1, and 3.2.

Sigismund, Roman emperor and king of Hungary, Bohemia, etc.” a century after his death, particularly because he had declared the city’s privileges “effective and powerful now and for all time.”⁶⁸ Sigismund’s reputation in the region as an ideal ruler, whose charismatic figure was worthy of commemoration, predated Haß: around 1450 the municipal council of Görlitz commissioned a portrait of the late emperor which hung in the council chambers as a symbol of gratitude for his magnanimous rule (according to Haß).⁶⁹ The inscription below the portrait, which is still extant, memorialized the late monarch as “pious and just” and “at one time the greatest king in the whole world.”⁷⁰

Portraiture, indeed, was the final medium through which Sigismund’s charismatic image lived on. As Len Scales has noted,

Sigismund’s reign coincided with a significant moment in European cultural history, when the multiplication of recognisable likenesses of the ruler came, as never before, to seem both possible and desirable. No monarch of the time was the subject of more intense and specific visual reproduction than Sigismund.⁷¹

Visual depictions of Sigismund dating from the 15th and 16th centuries abound, filling town halls, illuminated manuscripts, and (as crypto-portraits of the sovereign as a saint or biblical character) church frescoes throughout the lands of the Holy Roman Empire and the kingdom of Hungary.⁷² Even the chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet, whose masters, the dukes of Burgundy, were generally on bad terms with the kings of the Romans, seems to have been impressed by the appearance and manner of “lempereur Sagimont,” and a later 15th-century manuscript of his *Chroniques* depicts the king enthroned in majesty.⁷³ It may seem paradoxical that most of these images were produced on local initiative, sometimes long after the monarch’s death, but this points to the greater importance of the durable charismatic ideal that he came to represent, over and above the context-specific possibilities and limitations of his personal rule as an individual political actor in the early 15th century. To borrow Jaeger’s

68 “dem gossmechtigen unobirwintlichen fursten und hern, hern Sigmund Rohmischen keysser unnd zu hungern Behmen etc. konig” “unser privilegien ... nw unnd zu ewigen tzeiten krefftig unnd mechtig gesprochen.” *Ibid.*, 2:137; see also *ibid.*, 3:2:131.

69 *Sigismundus*, ed. Takács, pp. 159–60.

70 “fromm und gerecht” “einstmals größter König des Erdkreises.” *Ibid.*, p. 159.

71 Len Scales, “Book Review: *Sigismundus, Rex et Imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387-1437*,” *English Historical Review* 124 (2009), 944–46.

72 See examples in *Sigismundus* ed. Takács, Part II.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 492.

conceptual categories, Sigismund's persona – when represented with sufficient skill – had an “enchancing” effect which weakened the distinction between life and art, such that the dead emperor continued to incarnate the ideal of a well-governed Holy Roman Empire.⁷⁴

This is demonstrated most clearly by perhaps the most famous surviving portrait of Sigismund, Albrecht Dürer's depiction of the emperor side-by-side with Charlemagne, which was commissioned by the municipal council of Nuremberg and completed around 1510-13 (Fig. 9.5). These two oil paintings originally decorated the doors of a large container for the *Reichskleinodien* (imperial insignia) – visually and materially impressive symbols of the Empire, which were displayed in a public ceremony every year in Nuremberg, whether or not the king or emperor of the Romans was present.⁷⁵ The resonance of Nuremberg as a home for the insignia was enhanced by the fact that the majority of the imperial diets of the 15th century were held in this imperial city.⁷⁶ The presence in Dürer's painting of Charlemagne – the charismatic resuscitator of the line of Western Roman emperors, who was credited with the *translatio imperii* to the Germanic peoples, was widely considered a saint, and belonged to the foremost figures of royal and chivalric legend throughout Europe – is highly significant for our understanding of the intersection of charisma and imperial government within the Holy Roman Empire. Even as the Empire's inner structures and dynamics were evolving in the 15th and early 16th centuries, concretizing around multiple centers, institutions, and associations, the figure of the monarch – the king and emperor of the Romans – remained the keystone of its imaginary system, if not always of its practical day-to-day functioning. Charlemagne, the re-founder of the Roman Empire and the ideal-typical peace- and justice-enforcing monarch in medieval tradition, was the quintessential symbol of this charismatic office in its idealized form. By the early 16th century Charlemagne had also been appropriated by polemicists who were developing narratives about a “German nation” (a term which must be understood in the politicized context of ecclesiastical and humanist discourses).⁷⁷ That Sigismund was selected to accompany this highly

74 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 3-5.

75 Ibid., pp. 480-86.

76 See Annas, *Reichsversammlungen*, passim.

77 See amongst others *Karl der Große und das Erbe der Kulturen*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin, 2001); *Karl der Große in Renaissance und Moderne: zur Rezeptionsgeschichte und Instrumentalisierung eines Herrscherbildes*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin, 1999); Caspar Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen: Konstruktionen einer deutschen Ehrgemeinschaft an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2005). On Charlemagne in Dürer's painting, see Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, “Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr,” in *Karl der*

charged character, in the city most closely associated with the ideology and performance of the Holy Roman Empire, indicates that he, too, had become the focus of a cult-like devotion at imperial sites like Nuremberg. As Jaeger notes, cult-like loyalty to a particular figure, even a long-dead individual mediated solely through an image, is one of the defining effects of charismatic art.⁷⁸ In Sigismund's case, this loyalty was surely related to the way in which the Luxemburg monarch had come to embody the ideals of imperial government which the patricians of Nuremberg and other German elites wished to celebrate and promote.

There were historically contingent reasons for choosing Sigismund over the dozens of other kings and emperors who had held the imperial office since Charlemagne. Of all the monarchs in recent centuries, Sigismund had been the most generous benefactor of Nuremberg, granting a total of 75 privileges to the city in the course of his 26-year reign.⁷⁹ We have already seen evidence of the close relationship that Nuremberg's elites maintained with Sigismund's administration. Furthermore, Nuremberg's government had orchestrated the permanent storage of the imperial insignia in their city with the approval and collaboration of Sigismund's administration in 1423. However, the municipal council of Nuremberg's request that Dürer paint Sigismund may well have been justified by more than just the close relationship between the monarch and the city some 80 to 100 years earlier. Sigismund himself, it will be remembered, had been exceptionally adept at using the insignia as part of his public performances of his imperial role wherever he went in the Empire, and especially before large audiences at the Councils of Constance and Basel. These performances were preserved in a multitude of narratives and images which predate Dürer's painting. After Charlemagne, therefore, it was Sigismund who was most closely linked to the imagery of the *Reichskleinodien* and the perfected notion of imperial rulership that they connoted. More generally, as we have seen, Sigismund's name and features were embedded in the collective memory of many different communities in the Holy Roman Empire as symbols of the imperial monarchy at its most energetic and impressive. If he was sometimes noted for his vengeful and deceitful manner and his perpetual impecuniousness, Sigismund nonetheless achieved a kind of posthumous immortalization as the epitome of a charismatic Roman king and emperor. His charismatic reputation was unparalleled amongst later medieval monarchs, at

Große als vielberufener Vorfahr. Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städte, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 9-21.

78 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 6-7, cf. chapter 4.

79 *Sigismundus*, ed. Takács, pp. 480-86.



a

FIGURE 9.5 Albrecht Dürer's oil paintings of Charlemagne (a) and Sigismund (b), which adorned the holder of the imperial insignia in Nuremberg. →



b

Catalogue numbers Gm167 and Gm168 in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. USED WITH PERMISSION.

least before Maximilian I and the explosion of new media which facilitated that ruler's propagandistic program of self-representation.⁸⁰

Conclusion

This attempt to consider Sigismund of Luxemburg's government through the lens of charisma has shown that the concept has the capacity to enhance our understanding of the Holy Roman Empire in the period of Sigismund's reign and its aftermath. This in turn has implications for the value of the concept of "charisma" as an analytical category for making sense of politics, society, and culture in later medieval Europe. Clearly, the widespread engagement with Sigismund as a staged persona and as an idealized archetype shows the centrality of the idea of a charismatic monarch, whether real or imagined, to contemporary understandings of how the Holy Roman Empire should be ruled and ordered. In a sense this finding reinforces the consensus in Germanophone scholarship, established under the influence of Peter Moraw in the 1980s and '90s, that the monarchy still framed and undergirded the political configuration of the Empire in the 14th and 15th centuries, regardless of the other changes in conception and structure that it underwent.⁸¹ However, the mechanisms of government that the concept of charisma invites us to consider do not fit neatly within the categories which are still used in the normative interpretation of the Empire – the "state," the "territory," and the "constitution" (*Verfassung*). Rather, the Empire as governed by Sigismund can be understood as a world of personal relationships framed and maintained by symbolic communication and conventional and negotiatory institutions and associations. In this sense, the later medieval Empire was similar in many respects to the Empire of the early modern period, which, as Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has demonstrated, relied heavily on symbolic communication to maintain its coherence.⁸² The impression given by the later medieval sources, not least the charters, seals, and chronicles produced or purchased on local initiative, is of a political system held together as much by the enthusiasm of varied local elites for a particular "enchanted" construction of charismatic imperial rulership as

80 On Maximilian's propaganda see Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008).

81 See note 18 above.

82 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Emperor's Old Clothes: Constitutional History and the Symbolic Language of the Holy Roman Empire*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York, 2015).

by any “constitutional” authority notionally bestowed on the ruler himself, or by any set of incipient “state” institutions.

“Charisma,” then, is a possible vantage point from which the plausible aspects of the existing models of the Holy Roman Empire can be confirmed, and the less helpful abstractions which still pervade the historiography can be improved by insights from the scholarship of imaginary and behavioral frameworks, particularly as manifested in chronicle accounts and visual and material culture. This perspective also underlines the relative success of Sigismund himself in operating within the system identified here. Little of what Sigismund did was truly new or different, but he maximized the benefit that could be extracted from the repertoire of rituals and media available to later medieval rulers – even the under-resourced Romano-German monarchs – in order to cultivate, project, and exploit the charismatic ideal of Roman kingship and emperorship. Sigismund seems to have functioned as a kind of central node, symbolically and sometimes practically, within a nexus of reciprocal political relationships between governing elites, all of whom justified their power in relation to the Holy Roman Empire – an edifice that was imbued with (supposedly) age-old sacral traditions, and which was viewed as the supreme guarantor of the common good of all of its inhabitants. There could not be an Empire without a king or emperor of the Romans, hence the captivation and enchantment of contemporaries by a monarch like Sigismund, who could perform and incarnate the ideal-typical role in a manner that resonated throughout German-speaking Europe and beyond.

Thus, the modalities of power emphasized by the investigation of charisma in the later medieval Empire fuse two elements. On the one hand, charisma in this context clearly relied upon the behavioral and psychological effects noted by Weber and Jaeger – the ability to evoke awe and loyalty vis-à-vis an authoritative and persuasive figure, or a hypermimetic staging or representation of that figure. At the same time, the “enchantment” provoked by charismatic performances, descriptions, or artifacts took effect within sophisticated structures (the monarchical court, imperial cities, church councils, regional leagues and alliances) and long-standing conventions (enfeoffments, ceremonial processions, commemorative writings). The persuasive and integrative force of charisma was therefore anchored within a historically, socially, and culturally contingent context. The case of Sigismund in the Empire highlights the importance of certain exalted individuals and positions in the socio-political configuration of later medieval Europe. It underlines the intertwined relationship between, on the one hand, developing institutions, offices, and administrative technologies and, on the other, personal, dynastic, and network-based relations of power. Evidently, these two sets of political modes and formats were

not, as medieval and early modern historians have sometimes assumed, antithetical to one another. “Charisma” – and the focus on the construction of the roles of powerful figures within wider systems that it entails – could certainly form part of a much-needed new conceptual toolkit to help us to rethink later medieval Europe beyond the confines of the restrictive categories and assumptions which have shaped traditional approaches to the politics of this period.

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PART 4

Mediation: The Intermediary Spaces of Charisma



Medieval Franciscan Architecture as Charismatic Space

Erik Gustafson

In a volume on the idea of charisma in history and aesthetics beyond Weber, I would like to step back and look at charisma before Weber but after Saint Paul. More specifically, this essay will examine the role charisma played in the *habitus* of medieval religious thought and how that thought structured the experience of medieval religious space. While Paul coined the concept of charisma as spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit, he included within the idea a wide variety of gifts made possible through divine grace. How did the concept of charisma as spiritual gifts then translate into the Middle Ages, if we separate the simple idea of spiritual gifts from the Weberian-influenced focus on seemingly supernatural power and authority? In fact, the gifts of the Holy Spirit as a trope have a significant history and theological significance, amongst which the thought of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio stands out both for his use of the term *charismata* and for the spatial underpinnings of his theology. The test case under analysis is the historical experience of Franciscan churches in central Italy, the cradle of Franciscanism.

In both its medieval theological and modern critical theory senses, the idea of *habitus* will form the conceptual framework connecting architecture and historical experience. Most associated in medieval intellectual history with the 12th- and 13th-century recovery of Aristotle's works, the doctrine of *habitus* held a central role in the increasingly technical moral philosophy of the era leading to Scholasticism.¹ The *habitus* is the mechanism by which an individual's education and experiences become accustomed sensory memories, predisposing similar responses in the future. As a predisposition and not an imperative, the individual can exercise free will in choosing to act with or against their accustomed tendencies; with each repeated act, the disposition becomes increasingly routine and internalized, forming part of the individual's identity. It

1 Marcia Colish, "Habitus Revisited: A Reply to Cary Nederman," *Traditio* (1993), 77-92; Cary Nederman, "Nature, Ethics, and the Doctrine of 'Habitus': Aristotelian Moral Psychology in the Twelfth Century," *Traditio* 45 (1989-90), 87-100; David Wagner, "Peirce, Panofsky, and the Gothic," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 48, no. 4 (2012), 436-55.

is important to note that this definition of *habitus* was hardly new to Christian theology, as it was rooted in Augustine's writings.² In chapter 73 of the *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, the first definition Augustine offers is the Aristotelian one,³ using wisdom as an example that can be learned and which then strengthens and consolidates one from foolish to wise.⁴ This doctrine was amplified by Augustine's extensive quotation from Cicero's *De inventione rhetorica* in Chapter 31 of *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, as well as *De libero arbitrio* 2:18-19 extolling the virtues as habits of the soul. Although frequently treated in relation to an individual's actions defining their moral character, the *habitus* was a general mechanism underlying a variety of cognitive practices. Key among these was recollection, the art of memory in which the intellect is trained to organize memories, making a vast amount of data immediately available to the mind.⁵ As Mary Carruthers has demonstrated, this *habitus* of recollection was the requisite beginning point for monastic prayer and writing.⁶ The capacity to recollect the layers of biblical passages, their exegetical texts, and the spiritual treatises advocating methods for their application, was fundamental to medieval Christian practice at an advanced level. The varieties of medieval *habitus* were predicated on education, training, and experience, building predispositions to actions in daily life. Likewise, the modern adaptation of *habitus* theory by Pierre Bourdieu has built on this definition, although Bourdieu's usage has a Marxist inflection emphasizing the social world and childhood conditions such as education, neighborhood, class, and family.⁷ Whereas the medieval *habitus* comprised predispositions that one could consciously hone and perfect, Bourdieu's *habitus* is entirely precon-

2 George Lavere, "Habit (*habitus*)," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), p. 411.

3 The chapter contains Augustine's careful parsing into four possible understandings of the term *habitus* in Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:7. The passage ultimately distinguishes between *hexis* and *schema* as the two Greek terms that could be translated as *habitus* in Augustine's short explanation of Christ's human and divine natures. For Augustine, the Aristotelian *hexis* is inappropriate to explain the Incarnation as Christ was not himself changed by humanity (which *hexis* would imply), but changed humanity by clothing himself in it (consonant with *schema* as a shape or kind of monastic clothing).

4 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, LXXIII; translated by Boniface Ramsey in *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions* (Hyde Park, 2008), pp. 135-37.

5 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 2nd ed (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 23-24, 75-89.

6 Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 1-6, 69-72.

7 For Bourdieu's definitions of *habitus*, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 82-83; idem., *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, 1990), p. 53. For comments on Bourdieu, *habitus* and historical inquiry, see Philip Gorski, ed., *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (Durham, 2013), pp. 6-11, 347-51.

scious, largely developed during childhood socialization, and triggered by one's environment. As a social phenomenon, Bourdieu's *habitus* can be analyzed by ethnographic observation, and thereby characterizes how groups or individuals act in relation to broader cultural fields.⁸ When speaking of the *habitus* of medieval religious thought and the experience of medieval religious space in this essay, my emphasis will be on the overlapping aspects of the medieval and Bourdieusian *habitus*. The solidly Augustinian medieval doctrine is that the *habitus* entails learned dispositions that can affect the behavior and character of an individual, whether for subconscious ethical virtue or for the conscious composition of prayer. Bourdieu is useful insofar as the *habitus* might be considered as a broader cultural practice, leaving aside elements such as his Marxist emphasis on preconscious class socialization. The *habitus* therefore becomes the operative mechanism for the embodied action of charisma as a theological concept, while church architecture serves as the arena in which the Bonaventuran practice of charisma can unfold.

While scholars have long made much of the charisma of the Franciscans and the Weberian charisma of its leaders,⁹ the power of Franciscan architecture as charismatic space has never been mooted. Well-documented preachers, contentious proceedings over doctrine, and the patronage of famous artworks often characterize the medieval Franciscans. Moreover, the inescapable legacy of Francis's founding charisma has overshadowed the development of the Order's own distinct identity. Franciscan houses are rarely mentioned other than as the location of artworks or General Chapter meetings. However, Franciscan architecture can more usefully be considered as the charismatic articulation of a Franciscan identity developed post-Francis, an identity crafted through mediated movement and ritual practices to inspire devotion among the faithful.

This essay will examine how Franciscan architecture spatially attests to the participative and performative aspects of Franciscanism. Franciscan architecture was not merely a backdrop for preaching and painting, but was decisive in establishing a compelling sense of place for enacting a Franciscan *habitus* of religious experience. By means of embodied strategies of spatial distinction created by architectural screens and nuanced through an innovative lack of regulation for gendered access, the eastern halves of churches became spaces where the laity could devotionally seek their spiritual perfection in the com-

8 For secondary analysis of Bourdieu's system, see David Swartz, "Metaprinciples for Sociological Research in a Bourdieusian Perspective," in *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, pp. 19-35.

9 For example, see Stephen Jaeger's discussion in this volume of charisma in the *vita* of Francis.

pany of the Franciscan friars. At the core of this spatial *habitus* were the gifts of the Holy Spirit and grace, space made charismatic by Bonaventure's distinct use of the *charismata* within his theology of spiritual ascent.

Central Italian Franciscan Architecture and Space

What, then, is Franciscan space?¹⁰ It is useful to begin with a simple visual analysis. Nearly all central Italian Franciscan churches are longitudinally planned, whether they are single-naved churches such as the mother house of San Francesco in Assisi or three-aisled basilicas such as Santa Croce in Florence (figs 10.1-10.8). One of the defining traits of all these churches is their visual pull down the length of the nave. In some churches, such as Santa Croce, this effect is emphasized through the addition of continuous horizontal elements such as the balcony, which provided further visual guides for the eye along the dominant axis. The vaults of the nave of San Francesco in Assisi fulfill a similar function, although vaulting was banned by the Constitutions of the order as excessive. This dominant axis is generally only challenged or ruptured in visual terms at the eastern, altar end of the churches, where transepts, chapels and occasionally ambulatories complicated the visual simplicity of the main nave (figs 10.5-10.6). While the visual pull of the main nave axis tends to draw the visitor down the length of the church, the transepts and chapels stall that movement, creating a variety of visual axes and spaces to physically inhabit, explore, and engage. Each transept arm or chapel has its own axis, each with a potential visual pull, prismatically splintering the visual clarity of the nave.

Today these churches have lost their medieval character, shorn of the dividing walls and the monumental furniture that gave visual structure to the interior spaces. Most Franciscan churches are now open boxes, the result of 15th- and 16th-century renovations. Further, Franciscan architecture took different forms around Europe, as the Franciscans didn't repeat the same building type across the continent.¹¹ While the floor plans of Franciscan churches varied, the progression of spaces within these buildings was generally consistent. In nearly all of the Order's churches, the overarching interior space was divided by screen walls into three more discreet spaces (figs 10.1-10.2). As these spaces

10 The most recent consideration of Franciscan space is Donal Cooper, "Experiencing Dominican and Franciscan Churches in Renaissance Italy," in *Sanctity Pictured*, ed. Trinita Kennedy (Nashville, 2014), pp. 47-61.

11 Wolfgang Schenkluhn, *Architektur der Bettelorden: Die Baukunst der Dominikaner und Franziskaner* (Darmstadt, 2000).

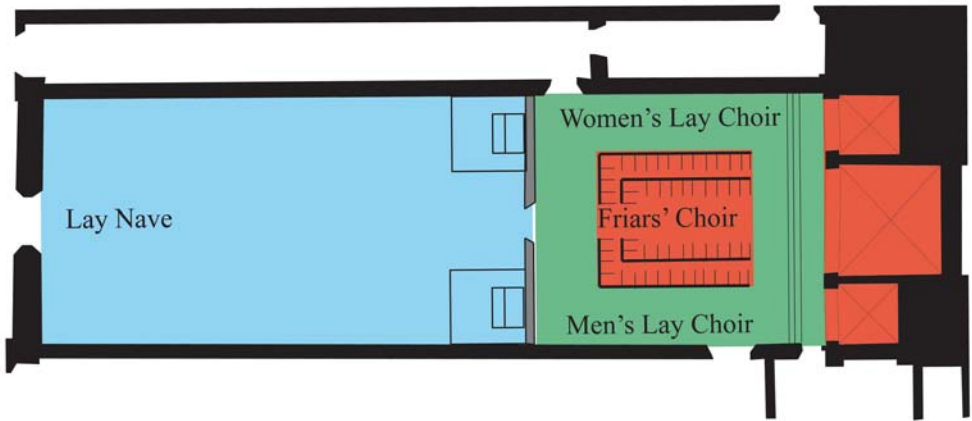


FIGURE 10.1 *San Francesco, Arezzo, c.1314, Plan with Spatial Layers* (PLAN BY AUTHOR).

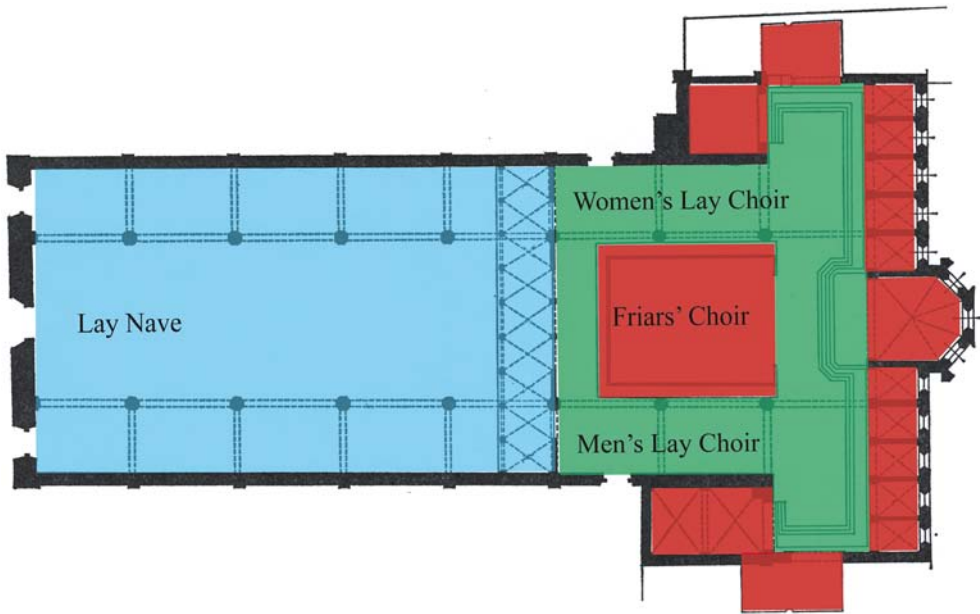


FIGURE 10.2 *Santa Croce, Florence, Plan with Spatial Layers* (PLAN BY AUTHOR).

were not reliably named in historical sources, I will refer to them as the lay nave, the lay choir, and the friars' choir. The overall space of the church was ruptured by the main dividing screen, which usually stretched across the entire width of the church. In the Florentine church of Santa Croce, this screen was referred to as a *tramezzo*, a useful term in that it emphasizes the structure's role



FIGURE 10.3 *San Francesco, Pienza* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).



FIGURE 10.4 *Santa Croce, Florence, Nave* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

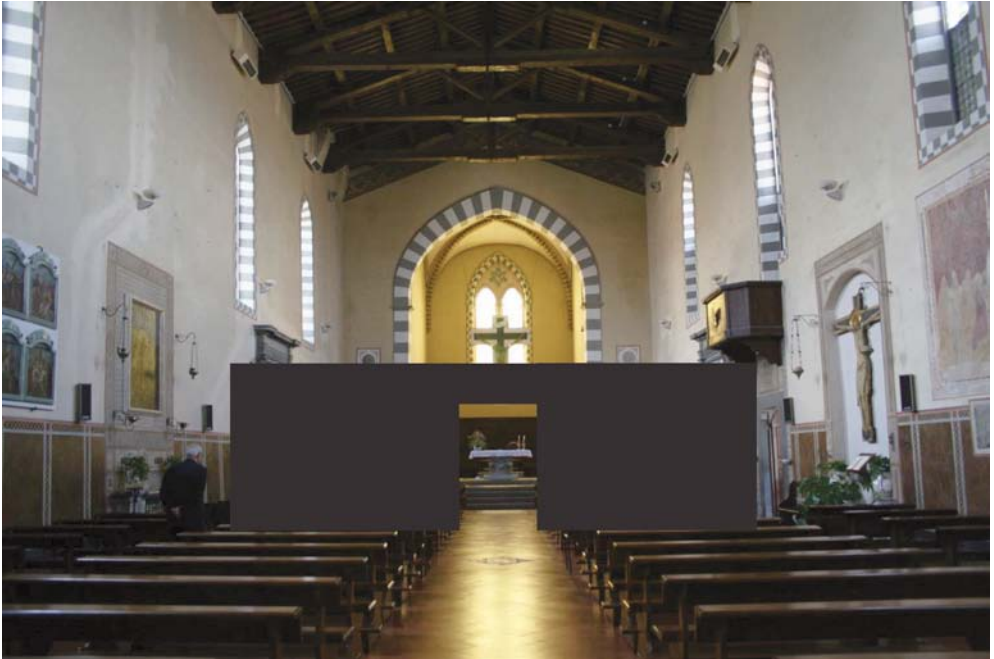


FIGURE 10.5 *San Francesco, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, Tramezzo Mockup* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

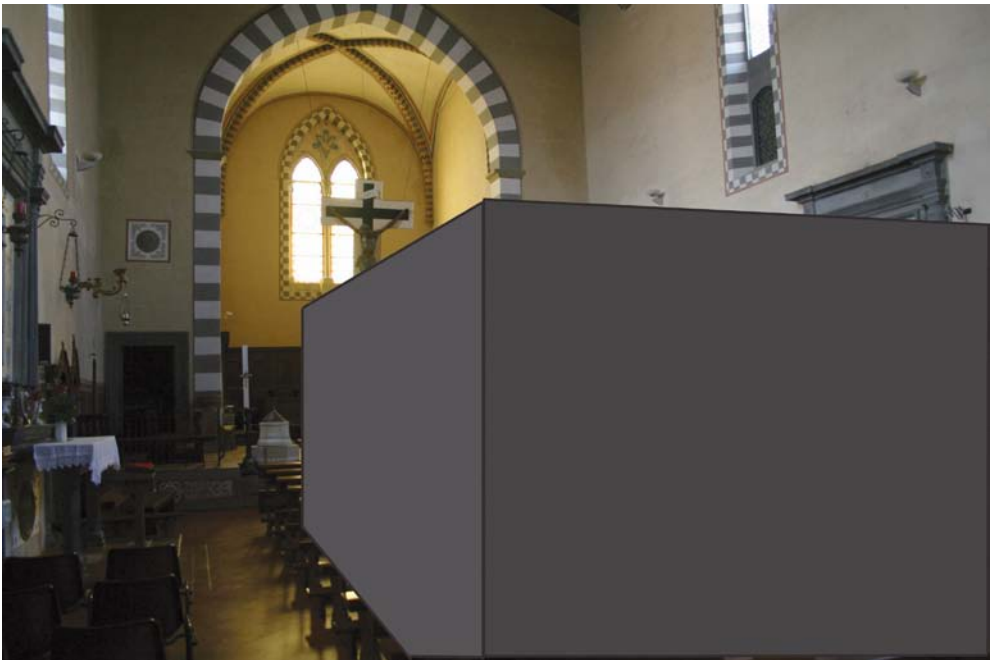


FIGURE 10.6 *San Francesco, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, Choir Screen Mockup* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).



FIGURE 10.7 *Santa Croce, Florence, Transepts and Chapels* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).



FIGURE 10.8 *San Francesco, Pisa, Transepts and Chapels* (PHOTO: AUTHOR).

in bifurcating the church interior.¹² Crucially, the *tramezzo* screen is distinct from the choir screen, which defined the third area, the friars' choir approaching the sanctuary around the high altar.¹³ A second screen beyond the *tramezzo* defined a U-shaped pocket of space, which was the friars' choir proper containing the brothers' stalls. The choir screen and *tramezzo* together defined the lay choir, which incorporated the space beyond the *tramezzo* except for the friars' choir. The lay choir space ended against or was surrounded by a series of chapels.

The fundamental problem in trying to understand the medieval spatial *habitus* of Franciscan churches lies in coming to terms with the role of the *tramezzo* dividing screen. Did the Franciscans follow the precedent of most medieval monastic orders, and sequester themselves behind the *tramezzo* in *clausura*, the enclosed space meant to separate the religious from the secular world?¹⁴ Or was the *tramezzo* a more porous structure, allowing the laity to access the chapels and altars beyond that screen? The prevailing consensus has been that the Franciscans would have adopted an approach closer to *clausura*, possibly allowing some members of the male laity through the *tramezzo* at certain times but only extremely rarely allowing women into the space beyond.¹⁵ However, an examination of the Franciscan legislative Constitutions does not support this scenario.¹⁶ Unlike the Dominican and Augustinian Hermit

12 Marcia Hall, "The *Tramezzo* in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconstructed," *The Art Bulletin* LVI, no. 3 (1974), 325-41; "The *Ponte* in S. Maria Novella," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 37 (1974), 157-73; and *Renovation and Counter-Reformation* (Oxford, 1979); and Monika Schmelzer, *Der mittelalterliche Lettner in deutschsprachigen Raum: Typologie und Funktion* (Petersberg, 2004).

13 On medieval European choir screens, see Jacqueline Jung, "Beyond the Barrier: the Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 4 (2000), 622-57.

14 Jean Leclercq, "Clausura," *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* (Rome, 1975), 2:1166-83.

15 Margaret Aston, "Segregation in Church," in *Women in the Church*, eds. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford, 1990), pp. 237-94; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Gender, Celibacy and Proscriptions of Sacred Space: Symbol and Practice," in *Women's Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church*, eds. Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury (Albany: 2005), pp. 185-206; Ena Giurescu Heller, "Access to Salvation: The Place and Space of Women Patrons in Fourteenth-Century Florence," in *Women's Space*, pp. 161-84.

16 Erik Gustafson, "Tradition and Renewal in the Thirteenth-Century Franciscan Architecture of Tuscany" (Ph.D. Thesis: New York University, 2012), pp. 251-314; Caesaris Cenci and Romani Georgii Mailleux, eds., *Constitutiones generales ordinis fratrum minorum I (saeculum XIII)* (Grottaferrata, 2007); Cenci and Mailleux, eds., *Constitutiones generales ordinis fratrum minorum II (Saeculum XIV/1)* (Grottaferrata, 2010). For an English translation of the 1260 Constitutions, see Dominic Monti, ed., *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order* (St. Bonaventure, 1994), pp. 71-135.

Constitutions, which both have very clear rubrics on allowing women into church spaces, the Franciscans were completely silent on the issue.¹⁷ While the Dominicans banned women from passing the dividing screen and the Augustinian Hermits adopted a sometimes-yes-sometimes-no policy, the only Franciscan stipulation regarding women was that a brother never be alone with a woman.¹⁸ The only time something like *clausura* was invoked in the Franciscan legislations was for novices, not for the friars themselves.¹⁹ Donal Cooper has shown that mendicant choirs were often used in Tuscany as places for witnessing and notarizing legal documents and contracts, highlighting both that the daily reality of churches was highly varied and that the laity often had access to the inner areas of the churches even if they might have been excluded during services.²⁰ This is not to say that the genders could not or would not have been separated. Rather, there is no reason to treat the Franciscan *tramezzo* as the device for that separation. Men and women were often separated side to side rather than front to back, as is shown in two paintings by Sano di Pietro of the Franciscan Saint Bernardino preaching (c.1448).²¹ It is therefore entirely possible, and I would argue likely, that when a gendered separation might have been appropriate – such as during a High Mass or the Hours – women could have gone to the left half of the lay choir and men would have gone to the right half. At other times, they would have been able to mingle, although while still observing the social mores such as chaperoning.²² A key component of the experienced context for Franciscan space would therefore

17 For Dominicans and screens, see first Joanna Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches: Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New Haven, 2013). For the Dominican Constitutions, Raymond Creyten, “Les constitutions des frères prêcheurs dans la redaction de S. Raymond de Peñafort,” *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* XVIII (1948), 5-68; A.H. Thomas, *De oudste constitutions van de Dominicanen* (Leuven, 1965). For the Augustinian Hermits, Ignacio Aramburu Cendoya, *La primitivas Constituciones de los Agostinos (Ratisbonenses del año 1290)* (Valladolid, 1966).

18 Gustafson, “Tradition and Renewal,” pp. 277-86.

19 “Instructions for Novices,” in *St. Bonaventure’s Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, ed. Monti, pp. 145-76.

20 Donal Cooper, “Access All Areas? Spatial Divides in the Mendicant Churches of Late Medieval Tuscany,” in *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages*, ed. Frances Andrews (Donington, 2011), pp. 90-107.

21 Corine Schleif, “Men on the Right – Women on the Left: (A)Symmetrical Spaces and Gendered Places,” in *Women’s Space*, pp. 207-50.

22 Adrian Randolph, “Regarding Women in Sacred Space,” in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, eds. Geraldine Johnson and Sara Matthews Grieco (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 17-41.

have been access for the laity of both genders through the *tramezzo* screen into the lay choir.

What then was the purpose of the *tramezzo* screen? The three spaces inside Franciscan churches were not static volumes within the architecture, but were interlocked and entwined through both vision and movement.²³ Both screens acted to subdivide the unified space of the whole church, an aspect made most clear when seen from the main doors of the church (figs 10.3-10.4). Here also the visual pull of the axial building was at its most marked, providing a visual impetus for physical movement towards the eastern end of the church. While the *tramezzo* screen fragmented the nave into two distinct spaces when seen from a distance, the act of passing through that screen in turn emphasized the transition of the first space into the second, of the lay nave into the lay choir. The *tramezzo* was generally pierced by at least one gate; in the exceptionally large and complex church of Santa Croce in Florence, there were three gates. These gates provided visual access of the lay choir space beyond as one approached the screen, as Jacqueline Jung has recently demonstrated for choir screens in French and German cathedrals.²⁴ However, in the case of Franciscan churches, it seems likely that the laity could have physically moved through the *tramezzo* screen as well. Passing through the screen would therefore have emphasized a qualitative differentiation of spaces, the lay choir being more special for requiring an act of passage to gain access. Having identified such a qualitative shift in the architectural experience of these churches, we turn now to the spatial *habitus* of Bonaventuran thought for a corresponding tripartite conceptual division of approaching the divine, grounded in the qualitative uplifting and ascent of the soul towards union with God.

Bonaventure and Medieval *Charismata*

One of the commonplaces in the intellectual history of charisma is that Paul's usage, "was eclipsed as a religious concept within the church by the end of the third century," laying "submerged" for centuries until it was "reinvented" by Max Weber.²⁵ Ayelet Even-Ezra has recently demonstrated that the concept of

23 Jacqueline Jung, "Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame," in *Thresholds of the Sacred*, ed. Sharon Gerstel (Dumbarton Oaks, 2006), pp. 185-214.

24 Jacqueline Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200-1400* (Cambridge, 2013).

25 John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (New York, 2009), p. 1. For an analogous discussion of the afterlives of alternate meanings for the Greek *charis* in late antique and medieval thought, see Martino Rossi Monti in this volume.

charisma was indeed still afloat, if not crucial, in the Middle Ages.²⁶ That study examined early 13th-century Scholastic debates on prophecy, linking them to new theological distinctions of grace as a gift of the Holy Spirit. However, in focusing her study specifically on prophecy, Even-Ezra has to some degree perpetuated the Weberian association of medieval charisma with superhuman powers. For medieval theologians, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were necessary for salvation, playing a crucial role in the dispensation of grace making possible eternal redemption. Such a conception was rooted in the Pauline epistles and their development of gifts and grace.²⁷

As mentioned previously, the second commonplace in considerations of charisma is that the charismatic gifts were defined by the supernatural abilities listed in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. Six of the nine spiritual gifts listed by Paul are indeed superhuman abilities (healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues), and the other three are very human abilities (wisdom, knowledge, faith). Tongues and prophecy have drawn the most attention, and the fading of these phenomena across the early centuries of Christianity has been taken as evidence of the disappearance of charisma. However, this was not the only biblical group of traits associated with the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 11:2-3, the Spirit comes to rest upon the shoot of Jesse, bringing seven spirits (wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord). That these traits informed Paul's gifts of the Spirit has been noted, but their significance as the medieval Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit has not figured in the intellectual history of charisma. Moreover, all seven are fundamental to the theology of grace and redemption, far more useful to practical early Christian and medieval theologians working out the moral ramifications of Christian life than the supernatural and exceptional gifts in Paul. Further, all are relevant in considering the proper role of charisma as the spiritual gifts of grace from the Holy Spirit.

The Pauline passage introducing the *charismata* begins, "Now concerning spiritual things, my brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (*De spiritualibus autem nolo vos ignorare, fratres*).²⁸ These spiritual things are given as manifestations of the Holy Spirit (*datur manifestatio Spiritus* in 12:7), leading to the culmination of the chapter at 12:31 when Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "be

26 Ayelet Even-Ezra, "The Conceptualization of Charisma in the Early Thirteenth Century," *Viator* 44, no. 1 (2013), 151-68.

27 Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 21-32.

28 Latin and translation taken from the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library *The Latin Vulgate: Volume VI The New Testament* 1 Cor. 12:1, ed. Angela Kinney (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 910-11.

zealous for the better gifts," (*aemulamini autem charismata meliora*).²⁹ Drawing from the Vulgate, medieval theologians consistently used the Latin words for gift rather than the Greek charisma. The charismatic gifts in the Pauline epistles were translated in the Vulgate with terms such as *donum*, *donatio*, or *datum*, or were alluded to through references to grace (*gratia*). The term gift was not used in the Vulgate Isaiah, but the term *spiritualia* used in 1 Corinthians 12:1 provided medieval interpreters with a clear link to the lists of spirits in Isaiah 11:2-3. In *De Spiritu Sancto*, Ambrose referred to the seven gifts (*spiritualia*) of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah, as well as describing them as gifts (*dona*), while referring to the charismatic gifts of Corinthians also as *dona*.³⁰ Augustine linked these *spiritualia* to gifts (*dona*) of the Spirit from Isaiah 11 in *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, and discusses the Holy Spirit as gift (*donum* and *donatio*) in *De Trinitate*.³¹ Following the model of Augustine, most theological writers in the Western Church preferred Latin terms for gift. Gregory the Great discussed the gifts of the Holy Spirit in *Moralia in Job*, relating the *dona sancti Spiritus* to the virtues.³² Aquinas would cite both authors in his discussion of the Gifts in his *Summa theologiae*.³³ The medieval textual record for spiritual gifts is primarily grounded in the terminology of gift (*dona*), the Spirit (*spiritualia*), and grace (*gratia*). The shared vocabulary between references to the gifts in Isaiah and 1 Corinthians in the textual tradition only emphasized the fluidity between the lists, with the Old Testament list eventually replacing the Pauline as the standard spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit.³⁴

However, one use of the Latinized term *charismata* did survive in the Vulgate Bible: 1 Corinthians 12:31 reads, "But be zealous for the better gifts [*charismata meliora*]. And I show unto you yet a more excellent way."³⁵ Further, at least one medieval theologian made use of the term *charismata* in addition to the common *donum* when discussing the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure used the term in his short theological summa, the *Breviloquium*, as well as in other writings such as the *Legenda maior* of Francis and the unfinished *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, giving *charismata* a specifically Franciscan inflec-

29 *The Latin Vulgate* 1 Cor. 12:7, pp. 910-11; 1 Cor. 12:31, pp. 914-15.

30 Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 1.0.4, 1.16.159 for Isaiah, 2.13.150-52 for Corinthians.

31 For Augustine, Potts, *Charisma*, pp. 87-90, as well as throughout *De gratia et libero arbitrio* and *De Trinitate* 5.12-15.

32 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, 2.LVI.89-92.

33 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, Q. 68: Of the Gifts.

34 This is hardly a comprehensive overview of spiritual gifts in the early theology of the church. As far as the author is aware, no such study exists, although it would be invaluable.

35 *The Latin Vulgate* 1 Cor. 12:31, pp. 914-15.

tion in 13th-century theology.³⁶ As the *Breviloquium* was Bonaventure's most popular text, providing a concise compendium of his Franciscan vision for Christian life, it will be the first point of reference for the present study. How did Bonaventure then use the term *charismata*, or distinguish *charismata* gifts from *dona* gifts? His first use of the term is suggestive, coming in the prologue of the *Breviloquium* amidst a discussion of the dimensions of Holy Scripture. Using the breadth, length, height, and depth of Scripture, Bonaventure begins his text with spatial metaphors, laying out for his readers how to search out the unfolding depths of sacred doctrine.³⁷ In describing the height of scripture, Bonaventure equates the beauty of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the splendor of the gifts (*charismata*) of holiness, which "possess a lofty subject matter, which engages our mind and raises aloft its vision."³⁸ These traits of uplifting and engaging the subject distinguish Bonaventuran charismatic gifts from general gifts of the Holy Spirit, although he was not consistent in his usage.³⁹ They are consistent, however, with the role the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit play in Bonaventure's theology of grace and salvation.

Bonaventure's theology has been characterized as a mystical ascent towards union with God.⁴⁰ Grace and salvation (or justification in the technical theo-

36 Bonaventure used the term *charismata* sparingly: 12 times in the *Breviloquium*, twice in the *Legenda maior Sancti Francisci* (7.1 and 8.1 of the Miracles), eight times in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, but interestingly not once in the *Collationes de Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*.

37 Bonaventure had used the same device to structure his *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum*; see Emmanuel Falque, "The Phenomenological Act of *Perscrutatio* in the *Proemium* of St. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001), 1-22.

38 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Prologue 3.3, p. 12-13 of WSB IX (2005).

39 The 12 uses of the term *charismata* in the *Breviloquium* include the Prologue mentioned in the previous note; 4.2.1 introducing the fullness of gifts (*charismatum*) as part of the union of natures in the Incarnated Word; twice in 4.5.1 expanding on that theme considered in the gifts (*charismata*) of Christ's affections (*affectu*); 4.7.5 on the perfection of merit in Christ's deeds emphasizing the fullness of his great gifts (*charismatum*); 4.8.1 referring to the previous point (*plenitude charismatum*); three times in 4.10.8 introducing the gifts of 1 Corinthians 11 as the effect of Christ's suffering in the Passion, poured out to the Apostles at Pentecost; 5.10.4 as the seven divine charisms (*charismatum*) corresponding to the seven petitions and gifts of sevenfold grace; 6.9.2 on the integrity of the Eucharist through Christ's healing and gifts (*charismata*) of grace; and finally, 7.7.5 on the glory of Paradise, and the varying amounts in which different members of Christ receive the gifts (*charismata*), recalling the Pauline construction.

40 Ilia Delio, "Theology, Spirituality and Christ the Center: Bonaventure's Synthesis," in *A Companion to Bonaventure* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 361-402; Gregory LaNave, *Through Holiness*

logical sense) are an early step within this system, providing the springing point for deeper understanding and advancement towards the divine. To use a rope climbing metaphor, two forms of grace function as the ascender for spiritually raising oneself up. For Bonaventure, all mankind is endowed with grace given gratuitously (*gratia gratis data*), referring to the “assistance God gives human beings so that they might prepare themselves for receiving the gift (*donum*) of the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ This infusion of grace, when combined with the expulsion of guilt, contrition, and an act of free choice, merits for the Christian sanctifying grace (the grace that makes pleasing, *gratia gratum faciens*).⁴² This is enough for justification, for salvation, which in the technical sense must be merited congruously (*de congruo*) for Bonaventure rather than by right. That is to say, merit accrued before justification depends on the condescension of God, so it is considered fitting (*congruo*) that any value of such merit be dependent on God’s benevolence. Once an individual has been justified by sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), any merit is accrued by right (*de condigno*) based on the shared dignity of Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit in “the grace that makes pleasing.”⁴³ Between these two forms of grace, Bonaventure considers all gifts of the Holy Spirit to be gratuitous grace, available to the sinner and the justified alike.⁴⁴

However, further merit can be acquired, greater proximity to union with God broached, through what Bonaventure labels as the three branches of Grace: the virtues, the gifts, and the beatitudes.⁴⁵ These three *habiti* parallel the state of the soul in a series of triadic hierarchies.⁴⁶ The primary level corresponds to the seven virtues, and to the rectified soul in the active life who believes. The intermediary level corresponds to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to the advanced soul in the contemplative life who understands what is believed. The final level corresponds to the seven Beatitudes, and to the perfected soul with mastery of both the active and contemplative lives who is

to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure (Rome, 2005); Timothy Johnson, *The Soul in Ascent: Bonaventure on Poverty, Prayer and Union with God* (Quincy, 2000); Charles Carpenter, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in St. Bonaventure* (New York, 1999); Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, 1981, 2000).

41 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.2.2.

42 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.3.

43 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.2.3-4; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 139-42.

44 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.5.1.

45 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.4-6.

46 On the virtues, gifts and beatitudes as *habitus* and their relation to one another, see Bonaventure, *Commentarius in quatuor libros Sententiarum* III, 24,p.1.a.1.

capable of vision of the understood. Such grouping in threes is typical of Bonaventure, reflecting the powerful mystical influence of Pseudo-Dionysius and the monastic tradition in considering the ascent of the soul. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are those from Isaiah, and while not referred to as *charismata* while being discussed in detail⁴⁷ are termed *charismata* when their effect is paired with the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer as effective modes to honor God and be worthy of merit.⁴⁸ In the *Breviloquium*, the seven gifts help the Christian soul advance in seven corresponding ways: they help one combat the seven vices, assist the natural powers, assist the virtues in discharging their tasks, help one suffer in the same spirit as Christ, help one act effectively, help one advance in contemplation, and facilitate both the active and contemplative lives.⁴⁹ Here we encounter the place of the *charismata* in Bonaventure's theology, as the second of three tiers in ascending to God through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The gifts engage the mind and raise aloft its vision towards the perfection of the soul in union with God, to paraphrase Bonaventure's prologue.

To put the Franciscan aspect of Bonaventure's theology in perspective, a quick summary of the equivalent issues in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas will be useful. In Aquinas, gratuitous grace allows "that a man may help another to be led to God," to which end the gifts of 1 Corinthians and Isaiah 11 are all considered gratuitous graces as they facilitate the conversion of souls to God and salvation.⁵⁰ Such a formulation clearly reflects the Dominican emphasis on teaching and preaching. The gifts are superior to the virtues in their ability to perfect the soul's powers in relation to the Holy Spirit, similar to Bonaventure. For Aquinas, it is the Holy Spirit that controls movement rather than the Franciscan mystical ascent of the soul.⁵¹ Sanctifying grace is a right (*de condigno*) for Aquinas, conferred by the sacrament of confirmation, rather than the *de congruo* merit advocated by Bonaventure.⁵² That is, merit is a state of being dependent on the divine nature; therefore, once one has attained salvation and takes one's just place within the hierarchy of creation, God's absolute nature dictates that merit also be just and not conditional. Again, the difference is one of movement; for Bonaventure, the soul must work and earn

47 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.5.

48 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.10.4.

49 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, v.5.2-9.

50 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II Q. 111, A. 4, a.c. & respondeo on 1 Corinthians 11 as gratuitous graces, I-II Q. 68 on the gifts, I-II Q. 109-13 on grace.

51 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II Q. 68, A8.

52 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III Q. 72, A. 7.

merit to approach perfection, while in Aquinas the soul exists in relation to God atop the hierarchy of the world.⁵³ Unlike in Bonaventure's writing, the term *charismata* only appears four times in the *Summa theologiae* of Aquinas, all as direct quotations from 1 Corinthians 12:31.⁵⁴ For example, "The Apostle, having enumerated the gratuitous graces adds: 'And I show unto you yet a more excellent way [*charismata meliora*]:' and as the sequel proves he is speaking of charity, which pertains to sanctifying grace. Hence sanctifying grace is more noble than gratuitous grace."⁵⁵ Aquinas relates the term *charismata* to charity and sanctifying grace rather than to the realm of the spiritual gifts as gratuitous graces. For Bonaventure the *charismata* engage and lift the soul, while for Aquinas the *charismata* indicate charity and the already sanctified soul.

The Historical Experience of Franciscan *Charismata* and Charismatic Space

In the Bonaventuran interpretation of Christian souls ascending Jacob's Ladder towards union with the divine, there is no distinction of who can or cannot climb the branches of Grace. That is, no way is reserved for friars while another is made open to laity. Because every human is endowed with gratuitous grace, they have the ability to act on their free will, expel guilt, and be contrite, thereby meriting the sanctifying grace of salvation. Every human therefore also can exert their free will and gain merit by internalizing and acting on the *habiti* associated with the three branches of Grace: the virtues, the gifts, and the beatitudes, climbing from a rectified soul to an advanced soul until perfection of the soul is reached. Such a hierarchy has very clear parallels to the experience of Franciscan space outlined above. If we translate this hierarchy to Franciscan churches, we can read the lay nave as the spatial *habitus* of the rectified soul, the active life of belief. The lay choir corresponds to the intermediary *habitus* of the *charismata*, to the advanced soul in contemplation. Finally, the friars' choir and sanctuary correspond to the *habitus* of the perfected soul, master of both the active and contemplative lives. Perfection, and in particular the idea of evangelical perfection, was for Bonaventure associated with the Franciscan order and its apostolic mission of a life balanced between the *vita attiva* and

53 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 64-67, 143-44.

54 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II Q. 111, A. 5, s.c.; II-II Q.43 A.7 ad 4; II-II Q. 161, A. 2, prae. 2; II-II Q.182, A. 1, prae. 3.

55 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II Q. 111, A. 5, s.c.

vita contemplativa.⁵⁶ In architectural terms then, the general laity would have ready access to the charismatic space of the lay choir, while entrance to the perfected zone of the friars' choir (and chapels) would theoretically be reserved for those whose devotion and spiritual accomplishments set them alongside the friars. For the laity, movement into the church would be directed towards passage into the charismatic space of the lay choir, through the door in the center of the *tramezzo* screen above which hung a giant crucifix.⁵⁷ The crucifix was a reminder for the faithful that they passed into the advanced, charismatic state of grace because of the Incarnation of Christ's body, reiterating the Franciscan emphasis on the life of Christ as a spiritual model. While the crucifix marked the role of the Son, passage through the screen marked the charismatic role of the Holy Spirit, and only through both the Son and Holy Spirit could the faithful approach the divine presence and spiritual union with the Father.

While the Franciscans are best known as a preaching order, preaching was not the basis of Franciscanism but merely a means to an end. The Franciscan ideal was founded on the *vita apostolica*, on humbly submitting the self for the good of the community, on providing an example of how anyone could approach the divine. The classic models of behavior (*habiti*) by Francis himself involved attending to lepers or similar extreme outcasts. Franciscanism as it developed turned towards higher levels of society, but while the nobility and the wealthy developed close ties to the Order, the poor and general laity remained key to Franciscan practice. Franciscanism encouraged all levels of the laity to humble themselves and join the apostolic movement, worshipping the divine alongside the Franciscans themselves. By allowing the laity through the *tramezzo* screen, normal men and women could surround the Franciscans inside their friars' choir, praying and worshipping alongside the brothers before the chapels and altars of the churches' east ends, joining the friars in their spiritual relationship with the divine as made possible by charismatic grace. Rather than following the transgressive examples of Francis with the lepers, the laity were encouraged towards more traditional forms of devotion such as private prayer, and attendance of Masses and the Hours. In a way, the laity became quasi-monasticized, engaging in forms of devotion and worship long associated with monastic practice.

56 In particular, see Bonaventure, *Quaestio disputata de perfectione evangelica*.

57 On the crucifix and the divine presence, see Donal Cooper, "Projecting Presence: The Monumental Cross in the Italian Church Interior," in *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, eds. Robert Maniura and Rupert Shepherd (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 47-70.

When seen through this contextual lens, the visual pull of the nave and the transformative potential of passing through the *tramezzo* become the rhetorical mechanisms to convey the charismatic compulsion and transformation of the Franciscan message. Franciscan space was the charismatic conduit to transmit the ideals of the order, experienced directly through either a learned or observed *habitus* as one moved through the areas of the church towards the sacred presence housed in the chapels and altars of the eastern end. Passing through the *tramezzo* had the conceptual effect of endowing the faithful with the divine gifts of grace appropriate to the *vita apostolica*, experienced by the laity to a lesser degree than the friars themselves but nonetheless done alongside the brothers. Such an endowment was possible through the laity's knowledge of Franciscan doctrine, practice, and *habitus*, and their belief made the charismatic gifts active agents in their experience of the religious space. Polemically, the charismatic space of medieval Franciscan architecture allowed the laity closer regular access to the divine presence than other contemporary architecture. The Order's explosion of popularity and growth across Europe can therefore come as no surprise.

The churches of other orders had similar visual effects, but the experience of the space was vastly different. For example, Dominican churches were generally identical to Franciscan churches within regional contexts, both in terms of the larger architecture as well as the deployment of dividing screens. However, the Dominican Constitutions were far more circumspect in allowing the laity through the screens.⁵⁸ While the Franciscan architectural aesthetic and *habitus* drew the faithful towards and welcomed them into the east end of the church, the antithetical experience of Dominican churches established a clear hierarchy between laity and clergy. Such an experiential message was far more appropriate for the mission of the Dominicans, defenders of orthodoxy and the authority of the Roman Church. Unlike the experience of Franciscan architecture that engaged and compelled the faithful to action, the Dominican experience discouraged action while enforcing stasis. Further, the Dominican context again demonstrates the exceptionality of Franciscan space, revealing how profound was the novelty of the Franciscan use of space.

58 Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches*, pp. 25-46, 227-50.

Epilogue: Post-Weberian Charisma and the Compulsion of Architectural Space

While architectural space has a powerful visual component that can exert potential influence on how a building might be seen or experienced, interpreting that visuality is not so straightforward. Can the Weberian concept of charisma as an embodied source of authority capable of compelling the viewer towards certain behaviors or thoughts be brought to bear on architecture? *Gestalt* psychologists such as Rudolf Arnheim have sought to identify the universal structures of visual forms, which were then understood to pre-cognitively determine the experience of space.⁵⁹ More recent work on neuroscience and architecture has worked towards similar ends.⁶⁰ While such approaches treat architecture essentially as a source of authority capable of compulsion and direction, the mechanisms for such responses are couched in psychological or cognitive terms rather than in an embodied personality. More recent phenomenological studies rooted in social theory would instead distinguish visual reception from interpretation, therefore allowing the object of vision to be mediated through the cognitive filter of a culturally specific context. The extension of charismatic powers to objects, as in the work of Alfred Gell or C. Stephen Jaeger, is dependent still on a concept of embodied personhood.⁶¹ Personhood may be appropriate for corporations, but not for the buildings that house them. If we are to analyze the ability of architecture to compel a viewer charismatically in a post-Weberian usage of the term, it cannot be on the grounds of embodied personality. Literature, the plastic arts, and film all maintain mimetic references to the body, and although there are many bodily metaphors related to architecture, the lack of direct mimetic correspondence precludes their relevance.

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas has suggested a useful refinement of the modern, sociological idea of charisma, using rhetoric as an analog for how charisma is mediated between the source of charismatic power and the receiver/viewer. In contrast to older Weberian and Durkheimian definitions of charisma in which selfhood was thought to be lost in the face of charismatic authority, Csordas grounds charisma amongst the viewers rather than the

59 Rudolf Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (Berkeley, 1977).

60 John Eberhard, *Brain Landscape: The Coexistence of Architecture and Neuroscience* (Oxford, 2008).

61 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (Oxford, 1998); C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012). For a similar critique of mimetic charisma for medieval studies, see Paul Binski in this volume.

authority holders. For Csordas, the mental *habitus* of the receivers provides the power of charisma. "Rhetoric moves and persuades, and tracing its phenomenological consequences allows us to perceive not gross abolition [of self] but a shift in orientation ... within cultural configuration."⁶² Charisma then can be considered as the potential to move and persuade people to action within a specific cultural context. The mental outlook (*habitus* in the terms of this essay) of the receivers must be already aligned or prepared for the rhetorical force of charisma to have power. Returning to the built environment, architecture can and does exert visual forces, and can encourage movement in particular directions. The analogy of rhetoric is useful here as well, suggesting that the visual cues in combination with a historically grounded context can provide insight into the subjectively compulsive potential of architectural space.

Turning back to medieval Franciscan architecture, this post-Weberian charismatic power of Franciscan space must therefore be sought in how the churches were seen and used in the 13th century. That the *tramezzo* screen placed a physical and psychological barrier between the main portals and the advanced level of contemplative space of the Bonaventuran *habitus*, provides a powerful compulsive aspect to the medieval experience of Franciscan churches. The viewer is compelled forward physically as well as spiritually, into the lay choir and towards the chapels. Not only is the lay choir a charismatic space in Bonaventure's theological formulation, but it can also be considered charismatic in Csordas's post-Weberian sense. The spiritual ascent of the faithful through Franciscan spirituality towards union with the divine was sanctioned by the *habitus* of the laity, trained by their Franciscan spiritual fathers and disseminated from Bonaventure's theology in myriad devotional texts and manuals such as the *Meditaciones vitae Christi*. Medieval Franciscan religious space was driven by charisma, both through the *charismata* as a step towards spiritual perfection as well as through the compelling power instantiated by the Bonaventuran spiritual *habitus*. In either sense, the Franciscans established a new paradigm for church architecture with their creation of a unique charismatic spatial *habitus*.

62 Thomas Csordas, *Language, Creativity and Charisma: Ritual Life in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* (New York, 2001), p. 151.

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Precious-Metal Figural Sculpture, Medium, and Mimesis in the Late Middle Ages

Joseph Salvatore Ackley

Introduction: Metal vs. Paint

When imaged, the divine figure in medieval Christianity was typically designed to attract the viewer's gaze: these were images to be run towards, not run from. Whether masochistic *imitatio* or delightful voyeurism, these images provoked pleasure in their viewers, modeled a higher state of existence, and extended an invitation to partake. They looked attainable even if they were not. They were, in a word, charismatic. To figure the charismatic divine, be it as God, Christ, the Virgin, the saints, or regular mortals momentarily touched by grace, the medieval artist shaped a variety of media. Each medium could claim, enable, and magnify a distinctive range of resonances and significances. Gold and silver might signal the glorified, heavenly, immortal body; flesh- and rose-colored paint could recall a shared humanity, as well as the earthly, humbling, and yet graceful enfleshment of Christ's own Incarnation.

Metal, wood, paint, stone, glass, bone, ivory, alabaster, and other materials thus generated a spectrum of representational modes for the human figure, several of which would have simultaneously occupied a single designated space, be it an altar, a church choir, or the multimedia surfaces of a chalice. Ivory statuettes stood adjacent to polychromed-wood sculpture, an altarpiece's painted panels were draped with figured textiles, and so on. Such clusterings of figured media physically revolved around the Christian divine made present, perhaps embodied or represented in a cult image, perhaps actualized in the Eucharist, a presence both enticing and remote. While one might see a multimedia unity in such decorative ensembles, another might see competition and hierarchy, or at least *varietas*, multiple chains of symbolism (reinforcing, contradictory, and superfluous alike) on simultaneous offer. Within these

* This essay has been enriched through the thoughtful feedback of Katherine Morris Boivin and its two anonymous reviewers, as well as conversations with Greg Bryda, Jessamyn Conrad, Andrew Griebeler, Julia Perratore, Adam Stead, Brendan Sullivan, and Shannon Wearing. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

options, this essay attends to the charismatic potential of the precious-metal medium.

A c.1465-67 reliquary bust of St. Barbara, attributed to the workshop of Nikolaus Gerhaert von Leiden, encapsulates key trends of polychromed-wood figural sculpture in the 15th-century North, a genre then developing towards an ideal of mimetic verisimilitude and human presence (fig. 11.1).¹ Instead of the strictly symmetrical and stiffly frontal pose that had characterized reliquary busts since their 9th-century origins, the Barbara sculptor animates the saint: she has arms (hitherto rare among reliquary busts), her drapery and face are modeled rather naturalistically, and she gazes – no, glances – not straight ahead, but to the viewer's right.² Barbara's is a courtly body, delicate and plump, with a long nose, high forehead, pursed lips, severely white skin, and full, rosy cheeks. Her hair cascades onto her shoulders, gloriously blond – that is, gilded, as is her mantle. The gilding, importantly, quasi-transfigures and lifts Barbara from her otherwise earthly existence into an otherworldly plane. A relic, probably mounted beneath a precious stone, originally occupied the oval cavity on her chest. Barbara seems, in saintly fashion, impervious to her martyrdom: she clutches her tower of imprisonment, the windows of which are filled with silver- or tin-leaf, and yet the thumb and forefinger of her other hand are pinched together, the pinkie drawn back, as if to hold a flower.

Equally elegant is a c.1350-60 Rhenish statuette, now in Aachen, of the Virgin and Child with a now anonymous male donor (fig. 11.2), which stands 62 cm tall.³ The Virgin, whose drapery and pose derive from early 14th-century Parisian figural styles, holds a lily scepter and thrusts a hip to counter the weight of the Christ Child. Similar to Barbara, the Aachen statuette is a figural reliquary: relics could have been housed both beneath the sapphire on the Virgin's chest and within the base. Unlike Barbara, however, the three figures here are hammered of silver and then completely gilded, save for their skin. In lieu of Barbara's rosy cheeks, red lips, white skin, and blue eyes, the Virgin's

1 Barbara's polychromy is largely original; her tower, hands, and mantle exterior display later repaintings. For literature see Stefan Roller, ed., *Nicolaus Gerhaert: Der Bildhauer des Späten Mittelalters* (Petersberg, 2011), pp. 248-54, cat. 9.

2 For the development of bust-length reliquaries see Birgitta Falk, "Bildnisreliquiare. Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der metallenen Kopf-, Büsten- und Halbfigurenreliquiare im Mittelalter," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 59 (1991-93), 99-104 and 110-25.

3 For literature see Gerd Althoff, ed., *Goldene Pracht. Mittelalterliche Schatzkunst in Westfalen* (Munich, 2012), pp. 395-96, cat. 227, hereafter cited as Althoff; and Dietmar Lüdke, *Die Statuetten der gotischen Goldschmiede. Studien zu den 'autonomen' und vollrunden Bildwerken der Goldschmiedeplastik und den Statuettenreliquiaren in Europa zwischen 1230 und 1530*, 2 vols., Reihe Kunstgeschichte 4 (Munich, 1983), 2:299-302, cat. 2, hereafter cited as Lüdke.



FIGURE 11.1 *Reliquary Bust of St. Barbara, Circle of Nikolaus Gerhaert von Leiden, Franco-Netherlandish, c.1465-67. Walnut with gilding and polychromy, H: 50.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1735). IMAGE © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.*

face is adamantly metallic, a highly lustrous and gloriously radiant silver. The Virgin's manner is balanced and restrained, and her face is finely modeled, including the arches of the eyebrows. Her medium, however, traffics in different traditions of figuring sanctity than those of the polychromed Barbara.

Barbara and the Aachen Virgin, both reliquaries, were also designed to be displayed as liturgical *ornamenta*, to charm and exert a charismatic pull. As peer liturgical objects, they would have shared the physical space of the late medieval altar: Barbara was probably made for the winged high-altar retable at



FIGURE 11.2 *Virgin and Child with Donor, Rhineland (Cologne, Lower Rhine, or Aachen?), c.1350-60. Silver, partially gilt, sapphire, H: 62 cm. Aachen, Domschatzkammer, G 62. PHOTO © STEPHAN KUBE, GREVEN.*

the Benedictine abbey of Wissembourg, and the Aachen Virgin would have occasionally been exposed for veneration on or near an altar of its host establishment.⁴ A similar adjacency attended the workshop origins of polychromed wood and precious-metal figural sculpture, as metalworkers frequently hammered figural sculpture after wooden models supplied by wood-carvers. From their conception to their eventual display, therefore, sacred images in these two media remained in close dialogue.

The Aachen Virgin and Wissembourg Barbara can also summarize the long history of medieval Christianity's anxious acceptance and eventual promotion of the sacred figural image in three dimensions. One representational approach pulled the figural image into precious metal, the other into painted surfaces. The second category was larger, encompassing wood, stone, and other fully or partially polychromed media (e.g. ivory). While art history has tended to argue that this latter category, in terms of mimetic verisimilitude, triumphed over the former during the 15th century, it must be recalled that these two approaches, the metallic and the hued, coexisted intimately through the end of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the metallic, be it metal sheet or gilt wood, remained a primary vehicle for fostering the charismatic charm of the divine.

The Charismatic Image

Charisma, as formulated by Stephen Jaeger, begins with an "extraordinary personal presence."⁵ A person's charisma simply radiates; heroic deeds are not its cause, although perhaps its effect. Its cause frequently resides in the inexplicable and the ineffable; the Greek *charis* means "grace," usually bestowed by a god. Charisma intoxicates the non-charismatic, who is then prompted to imitate and rise to the charismatic's level to hopefully partake in his or her charisma. The charismatic, though extraordinary (out of bounds, "hypermimetic"), may initially appear as mundane, as "hidden in the veil of the everyday,"

4 The Wissembourg provenance for Barbara cannot be firmly documented but is accepted. The high-altar retable was destroyed in 1806/07. See Jörg Rosenfeld, "Niclaus Gerhaert von Leiden in Straßburg. Bemerkungen zum Bürger, Künstler und Werk unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Weißenbürger Büsten," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 32 (1995), 14-22.

5 For Jaeger's definition of charisma see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), esp. chaps. 1, 4, 5, and 6, here p. 9; and C. Stephen Jaeger, "Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory," *New German Critique* 114 (2011), 17-34.

which in turn simply intensifies the eventual reveal.⁶ The charismatic bridges the real and the aesthetically artificial: “The dichotomies of real and illusion, life and art, so fundamental to the cultic experience of art in the West, are resolved in the medium of charisma. In this medium those opposites coalesce.”⁷

The charismatic image, as defined by Jaeger, is the representation of the charismatic (the hypermimetic) via the mimetic, the “hyperreal” made to look real. A representation of the charismatic him- or herself is prerequisite: for example, Christ’s body and face, not the empty tomb, the cross, or other touch relics. The viewer need only behold, and not contemplate or analyze, the charismatic image to sense the charisma of the depicted individual:

The educating force of charismatic art generally is exercised by the authority gathered on the narrative or visible surface. ‘*What does it mean?*’ is an all but irrelevant question ... Meaning, interpretation, hermeneutics, the apparatus of commentary inherited from Western exegetical tradition are minor in the face of charismatic force.⁸

Jaeger, having defined charisma this generally and flexibly, notes the radical contingency of its effect – that is, what one viewer finds charismatic another may not.⁹ The historian negotiates such subjectivity by being tasked not with asking whether Jesus of Nazareth (d. c.30 AD), Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), or Diane Keaton (b. 1946) actually had or have charisma, but whether their historical contexts treated them as if they did.¹⁰ The historian attends to the artifacts of the charismatic presence, to the methods of its construction, maintenance, and promulgation. Many of these artifacts concern, necessarily, the *image* of the charismatic.

The 6th-century Christ Pantocrator icon at Mt. Sinai (fig. 11.3), in Jaeger’s formulation, exemplifies the charismatic image.¹¹ The icon, by depicting a divine figure, is made to:

6 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 36.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.

9 Jaeger’s description of John Singer Sargent’s 1892 portrait of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw demonstrates this contingency. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-35.

10 See, for example, C. Stephen Jaeger’s essay in this volume on the “life-writing” of Francis of Assisi.

11 For Jaeger on the Sinai Christ and the medieval icon see Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 98-123.

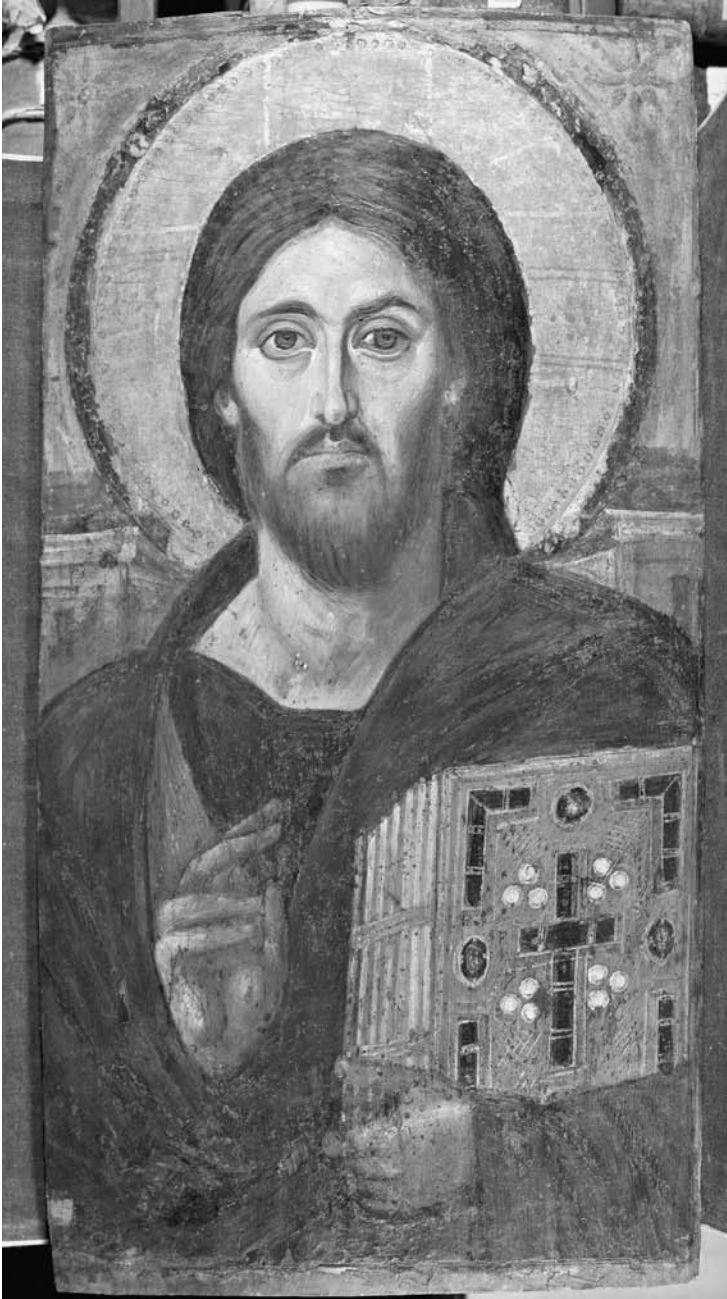


FIGURE 11.3 *Icon of Christ Pantocrator, Constantinople (?), 500s. Encaustic on panel, 84 × 45.5 cm. Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine's. PUBLISHED THROUGH THE COURTESY OF THE MICHIGAN-PRINCETON-ALEXANDRIA EXPEDITIONS TO MOUNT SINAI.*

... go to the boundaries of the human ... It [the icon] works its paideic effect by showing us how minor we are and how high we can rise. The illusion powerful enough to dissolve its own illusory character and lift the viewer into a “heightened” world, accepted as real, is the prerequisite of imitation.¹²

The Sinai Christ and the Wissembourg Barbara function similarly. Although traces of their narratives remain, such as Barbara’s tower and the generic yet identifiably earthly setting and garb of Christ, attention is directed to their flesh-colored faces.

Of such icons and icon-like images Jaeger writes, “... the religious force radiates from the face, and it works because the zone of the face is freed from semiotic function and given over entirely to an individual emotionality and passion that is virtually hypnotic, at the minimum riveting ...”¹³ Whether a legible image, or even simply a sensible one, can ever be “freed from semiotic function,” evacuated of narrative, or rendered purely affective is debatable.¹⁴ For the purposes of this essay, however, Jaeger’s definition of “charisma” and “charismatic image” may be narrowed to signal the iconic, relatively non-narrative figure of the human being that, somehow, suggests a wondrous, hypermimetically conceived charisma. While mimetic, therefore, the image must still be distanced from the viewer.

Many objects and images fulfill these requirements; their underlying conventions and patterns of appearance, however, may still be historicized into coherent and critically alert examples that remain wary of anachronistic projection. Indeed, it must be emphasized that other Western traditions of defining, picturing, and perceiving charisma existed. Bissera Pentcheva, for example, discusses ancient Greek and Byzantine *charis* as a characteristic or state signaled by the lustrous radiance of precious metals, above all gold:

For a work of art to have *charis* meant that it had, not pictorial or sculptural naturalism, but the sparkle of gold, through whose glittering spectacle divine presence became known. *Charis* was thus an expression of

¹² Ibid., p. 122.

¹³ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴ On affect and its theorists consider Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (2011), 434-72.

the phenomenal, the presence effects, the *simulation* rather than the *imitation* of presence [my emphases].¹⁵

Homer likens Athena showering Odysseus with *charis* to a metalworker covering silver with gold. Per Pentcheva, radiant metal engenders "... a scintillating tremble that conveys in its fugitive state of attraction the fleeting fragile moment of divine presence."¹⁶ Pentcheva's larger reevaluation of the Middle Byzantine icon casts simulation and performance, not reflection or imitation (not *mimesis*), as its goal, a goal better realized by the medium of precious-metal figural sculpture than two-dimensional painting.¹⁷

Two quite opposite definitions of the charismatic image are therefore on offer: the precious-metal image that prioritizes simulated presence over mimesis and whose medium signals divine grace (Pentcheva), and the mimetic image that usually idealizes the form, color, and texture of the observable world (Jaeger). The mimetic claims of late medieval figural sculpture in the West situate it within the latter category. Figural sculpture in *precious-metal*, however, continues to pull in aspects of the former. Jaeger argues that different media are differently capable of mimetic verisimilitude; that some media, such as paint, are thus better suited to picturing charisma than others; and that a hierarchy of charismatic images obtains.¹⁸ He acknowledges, however, that some precious-metal figural images, if appropriately mimetic, may achieve and emit a charisma similar to that exuded by the Sinai Christ.¹⁹ This essay expands this observation. A spectrum of charismatic images arises across late medieval sculpture, its poles occupied, heuristically, by the Aachen Virgin and the Wissembourg Barbara.

15 Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, 2010), esp. pp. 156-60, here p. 157.

16 Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, p. 193.

17 On this question see also Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Aesthetics of Landscape and Icon at Sinai," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65/66 (2014/15), esp. pp. 201-07.

18 Jaeger, *Enchantment*, esp. pp. 98-133.

19 See specifically Jaeger's appraisal of Cynthia Hahn's scholarship on figural reliquaries in Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 98, n. 1, and pp. 128-31, n. 41 and n. 44. For Hahn see Cynthia Hahn, "The Spectacle of the Charismatic Body: Patrons, Artists, and Body-Part Reliquaries," in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martina Bagnoli et al. (New Haven, 2010), pp. 163-72.

The Charismatic Image in Text

Since Late Antiquity precious metal and gemstones had been accruing an abundance of symbolisms, identities, and allegorical traditions, including that of the *charis*-rich substance.²⁰ Such precious media dazzlingly signaled the irruption and appearance of heavenly grace within the earthly sphere. The greater the luster and preciousness, the greater the potency. Jerome (d. 420), turning to Psalm 11:7, likens the purity and truth of the Word to silver that has been mined and then purified by fire.²¹ Both Gregory the Great (d. 604) and Rupert of Deutz (d. 1130) see the tarnish of silver as the darkness of the Old Testament, which is then polished by the Incarnation of Christ, its formerly hidden luster now released and shining forth.²²

When precious metal was shaped into the image of a saint, it allegorized the saint's body infused with and transfigured by heavenly *virtus*.²³ Biblical exegesis and hagiography alike provided abundant material for likening the saintly body to a glorified, incorruptible, and radiant body, a substance repeatedly pictured by precious metals and gemstones, including rock crystal.²⁴ Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:40-53 that *corpora caelestia* are differently glorious than

20 Introductions to this sprawling topic include Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-circa 1204* (University Park, 2012), pp. 31-44; Martina Bagnoli, "The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftsmanship in Medieval Reliquaries," in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martina Bagnoli et al. (New Haven, 2010), pp. 137-47; Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien. Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe*, 2nd ed., Münchner Beiträge zur Volkskunde 37 (Münster, 2008), pp. 49-104; Bruno Reudenbach, "'Gold ist Schlamm': Anmerkungen zur Materialbewertung im Mittelalter," in *Material in Kunst und Alltag*, eds. Monika Wagner and Dietmar Rübel, Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte 1 (Berlin, 2002), pp. 1-12; Dominic Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 61-152; and Hans-Jörg Spitz, *Die Metaphorik des geistigen Schriftsinns. Ein Beitrag zur allegorischen Bibelauslegung des ersten christlichen Jahrtausends*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 12 (Munich, 1972), pp. 191-200.

21 See Spitz, *Die Metaphorik*, p. 199.

22 Spitz, *Die Metaphorik*, pp. 196-97.

23 For the symbolism of precious-metal figural reliquaries see especially Bagnoli, "The Stuff of Heaven," pp. 137-47; Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, pp. 117-41; Hahn, "The Spectacle of the Charismatic Body," pp. 163-72; and Bruno Reudenbach, "Visualizing Holy Bodies: Observations on Body-Part Reliquaries," in *Romanesque Art and Thought in the Twelfth Century: Essays in Honor of Walter Cahn*, ed. Colum Hourihane, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 10 (University Park, 2008), pp. 95-106.

24 For saintly bodies being compared to rock crystal and glass see especially Arnold Angenendt, "Der Leib ist klar, klar wie Kristall," in *Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter. Politisch-*

corpora terrestria: heavenly bodies are radiant, lustrous, and bright.²⁵ In Polycarp's 2nd-century martyrdom, the burning body of the saint is likened to silver and gold being purified in the fire (and also bread baking in the oven).²⁶ Less remote is the flesh of Aelred of Rievaulx's corpse (d. 1167), which was observed to be clearer than glass, whiter than snow, and without blemish, similar to that of a child. Aelred himself had likened the body of Edward the Confessor (d. 1066), at Edward's 1163 exhumation and translation, to glass and snow, a picture of transfigured glory that also helped confirm the king's virginity.²⁷

Beyond symbolism and evocation, precious metals and gemstones could reflect and radiate heavenly light. They thus served as devotional tools, stepping stones to a higher plane lodged somewhere between the earthly and heavenly spheres. Suger of Saint-Denis (d. 1151), writing in the 1140s, famously describes this anagogical process, whereby the deserving mind, gazing at gold and gemstones, was permitted to momentarily dwell in a realm between those of "earthly slime" (*terrarum faece*) and "heavenly purity" (*coeli puritate*).²⁸ Importantly, Suger's anagogic ascendance, in this example, is not prompted by a figural image; instead, he is discussing the monumental gemmed cross made by St. Eligius, bishop of Noyon (d. 660).²⁹ The Eligius cross, a *crux gemmata*, represented the glorified, *charis*-infused True Cross. And precious media need not be shaped specifically into a cross to emit heavenly radiance: any object covered by or assumed up into such a precious substance, especially those adorning an altar, such as chalices, patens, antependia, and candelabra, could function similarly.³⁰

The radiance seen in the deceased bodies of Polycarp and Aelred might sometimes bleed over into the living. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) describes

soziale Kontexte, visuelle Praxis, körperliche Ausdrucksformen, ed. Klaus Schreiner (Munich, 2002), pp. 387-98.

25 See Reudenbach, "Visualizing Holy Bodies," p. 102.

26 Cited in Bagnoli, "The Stuff of Heaven," p. 138.

27 See Angenendt, "'Der Leib ist klar,'" pp. 394-95.

28 Suger of Saint-Denis, *Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, ed. and trans. Erwin Panofsky, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1979), pp. 62-65. Jaeger discusses Suger in C. Stephen Jaeger, "Richard of St. Victor and the Medieval Sublime," in *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), pp. 171-73.

29 For the Eligius cross see Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, ed., *Le Trésor de Saint-Denis* (Paris, 1991), pp. 56-59, cat. 1.

30 In addition to Suger, Pentcheva's discussion of a heavenly banquet recorded in the 10th-century *vita* of Basil the Younger nicely demonstrates the grace-giving power of non-figural objects. Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, pp. 158-59.

the exceptional person whose inner spirit overflows, exceeds, and breaks forth (*erumpere*) from its bodily limits. The radiance signals their charisma. As Bernard writes:

When the luminosity of this beauty [moral beauty, *honestum*] fills the inner depths of the heart, it overflows and surges outward, as a lamp hidden under a basket, or rather, as a light shining in the darkness, incapable of being suffocated by darkness. Then the body, the very image of the mind, catches up this light glowing and bursting forth [*erumpentem*] like the rays of the sun. All its senses and its members are suffused with it, until its glow is seen in every act, in speech, in appearance, in the way of walking and laughing ...³¹

Bernard's description straddles the real and the metaphoric. His biographers, however, grounded this description in the living image of Bernard himself. Geoffrey of Clairvaux, who spent years in Bernard's company, notes that in Bernard's flesh there was visible "a certain grace" [*gratia*, per Jaeger, the Latin analog of "charisma"], that Bernard's "face radiated celestial rather than earthly brightness [*claritas*]," that Bernard's "inner beauty [*pulchritudo interioris*] must needs break forth [*erumperet*] outwardly with visible signs ..." ³² The picture of normal flesh is made inadequate; instead, a graceful interiority breaks through, and Bernard's living image begins to approach the radiance materialized by precious-metal figural sculpture.

Contrast the charismatic Bernard with a secular, courtly charismatic. The male dreamer of Guillaume de Lorris's c.1225-30 portion of *The Romance of the Rose*, upon being admitted to Pleasure's garden, is captivated by the sight of Pleasure's coterie dancing.³³ The dreamer describes them, beginning with Pleasure (*Déduit*, sometimes translated as "Diversion"):

Pleasure was handsome, straight, and tall: never in any company would you find a better-looking man. His face was pale, with cheeks as rosy as an apple, and he was elegant and well dressed; his eyes were bright, his

31 Discussed and translated in Martino Rossi Monti, "Opus es magnificum": The Image of God and the Aesthetics of Grace," in *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York, 2010), pp. 24-25.

32 For Jaeger on Bernard of Clairvaux and these passages see Jaeger, *Enchantment*, pp. 143-46. I follow Rossi Monti's translation of Geoffrey of Clairvaux in Rossi Monti, "Opus es magnificum," p. 25.

33 For an art historical introduction to courtly love see Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York, 1998), pp. 27-49.

mouth charming, and his nose very finely formed; his hair was blond and curly, his shoulders rather broad, and his waist slender. He was so handsome and elegant and had such shapely limbs that he looked *like a painting* [my emphasis].³⁴

The dreamer continues on through the fine dress and graceful, elegant carriage of Pleasure and the other dancers, both male and female. White, fair skin, blond, shining hair, and sometimes rosy cheeks characterize the group that the dreamer longs to, and is invited to, join.

Together, the *Romance* bodies and Geoffrey's Bernard of Clairvaux appear to recapitulate the polarity of the Wissembourg Barbara and the Aachen Virgin. These two poles stake out a fertile, productive tension between apple-like, rosy-cheeked flesh and radiant, lustrous flesh, between the incarnate body and the transfigured body, between paint and metal. This tension is "fertile" precisely because these two figural modes frequently overlapped and interpenetrated. The bodies of Aelred and Edward were already incorruptible and whiter than snow while still on earth; such quasi-transfigured bodies blended the immortal, spiritual body with earthly flesh, as did the radiance emitted by Bernard's living body.

Indeed, radiance and color, especially those of healthy human skin, were repeatedly intertwined within natural philosophy and literature, and both became prerequisite to the state of beauty.³⁵ In Middle High German literature, beautiful bodies, as James Schultz notes, are most frequently described as having "radiance."³⁶ These bodies are not metallic, but colored, usually with the now familiar red lips, rosy cheeks, and white skin. Such color produces the body's *schin* or *glanz*, etc., a vocabulary Schultz translates as "radiance" specifically to emphasize the necessity of light and its reflection to beauty.³⁷

Within texts, therefore, the boundary between the metallic and the hued was delightfully permeable. The blond hair of Isold, in Gottfried von Straßburg's (d. c.1210) *Tristan und Isold*, so rivaled in radiance the gold circlet adorning her

34 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. Frances Horgan (1994; repr. Oxford, 2008), pp. 14-21.

35 Select discussions of medieval beauty, color, radiance, and skin include Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style, 1290-1350* (New Haven, 2014), pp. 22-30 and 179-85; Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013), esp. pp. 175-87; and Sarah-Grace Heller, "Light as Glamour: The Luminescent Ideal of Beauty in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Speculum* 76 (2001), 934-59.

36 James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago, 2006), p. 10.

37 Schultz, *Courtly Love*, pp. 80-83.

head that each "... shone, trying to outdo the other."³⁸ Such competition recalls the gilding of the Wissembourg Barbara's hair and crown – but with caveats. The gilding of Barbara's crown is a polished water-gilding (*Glanz- or Polimentvergoldung*), that of Barbara's hair matte (*Mattvergoldung*). Varnishes, perhaps of different shades, were applied to both crown and hair to modulate the luster of the gilding.³⁹ Indeed, the physical, real-world media of much sculpture and painting do not typically blend or combine as easily, as fancifully, or as willfully as the virtual media conjured by texts. Technical imperatives and stylistic conventions alike placed constraints, both limiting and stimulating, on the painter, sculptor, and metalworker.

The Precious-Metal Figural Image

The history of precious-metal figural sculpture is pivotal to that of monumental figural sculpture in the medieval West in general.⁴⁰ While it remains debated whether a monumental gold crucifix existed in Metz Cathedral in 636, by the early 9th century at latest freestanding figural sculpture had irreversibly begun to populate sacred spaces in the Latin West.⁴¹ Carolingian and Ottonian monumental sculpture included full-, half-, and bust-length figural reliquaries, Enthroned Virgin and Childs, and the Christ corpora of monumental crosses, all of which coexisted with a robust tradition of relief figural sculpture in stone and stucco. The dominant medium of pre-11th-century freestanding figural sculpture, however, was precious metal, always covering a wooden core.

38 Discussed and translated in Schultz, *Courtly Love*, pp. 85-86.

39 Roller, *Nicolaus Gerhaert* (see above, n. 1), p. 248, cat. 9.

40 Key studies of monumental figural sculpture in the West include Beate Fricke, *Fallen Idols, Risen Saints. Sainte Foy of Conques and the Revival of Monumental Sculpture in Medieval Art*, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages 7 (Turnhout, 2015); Anna Pawlik, *Das Bildwerk als Reliquiar? Funktionen früher Großplastik im 9. bis 11. Jahrhundert*, Studien zur internationalen Architektur- und Kunstgeschichte 98 (Petersberg, 2013); Manuela Beer, *Triumphkreuze des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zu Typus und Genese im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg, 2005), pp. 167-205; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), esp. pp. 297-310; and Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, 1972), esp. pp. 1-15 and 67-91.

41 Fricke, critiquing the textual record, places the Metz crucifix in the early 11th century, a re-dating accepted by Pawlik; Beer represents the older dating. See Fricke, *Fallen Idols*, p. 105; Pawlik, *Bildwerk*, pp. 279-80, cat. 30; and Beer, *Triumphkreuze*, p. 170.

Precious-metal figural images could channel the rich symbolism and allegorical chains discussed above. Concurrently, and no less importantly, precious metal, precisely because of its less mimetic, more otherworldly radiance, could preempt charges of idolatry, always a larger concern with images in three dimensions than those in two. In the Sinai Christ icon, gold and gemstones are seen both in Christ's halo and in the book-cover of his codex, while Christ's flesh is painted. Christ's Incarnation – his graceful humiliation – remained central to the Christian belief system. In manuscript and panel painting, accordingly, the overwhelmingly preferred medium for the skin of holy figures was paint; gold- and silver-leaf, conversely, could appear almost anywhere else on the page or panel.⁴² Early monumental figural sculpture, however, flipped the formula of the Sinai Christ and translated the precious metal of the book-cover to the god's human body.

In the Ottonian era, with earlier anxieties of idolatry contained, monumental freestanding figural sculpture in polychromed-wood began to flourish.⁴³ This occasionally entailed a coexistence, even an interchangeability, of metal and paint within a single sculpture, as is demonstrated by the c.1051-58 Imad Madonna in Paderborn. The freestanding, monumental, carved-wood Virgin and Child was originally polychromed: the Virgin's mantle was white with red highlights and patterned decorative motifs, the Child's mantle blue. After being damaged by fire in 1058, the Madonna was covered with hammered gilt-copper plaques funded by a documented gift from Bishop Imad (d. 1076).⁴⁴ It seems, due to the nail holes, that the flesh areas of the Virgin and Child, as well as the Child's hair, were *not* covered with the gilt-copper plaques at this time but instead remained polychromed.⁴⁵ This is an intentional and significant decision, given that peer monumental precious-metal figural sculpture did not at all hesitate to cover areas of flesh with gold and silver, and an explanation such as a scarcity of (non-precious) copper is implausible.

The desire for fully precious-metal figural sculpture, however, did not abate. Such sculpture, in the form of cast figures, hammered figures in relief, or freestanding figures hammered over a wood core, continued to be produced through the Middle Ages (the corpus remains relatively understudied in An-

42 See, for example, Belting's discussion of "living painting" and 11th-century Byzantine icons in Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 261-65.

43 For the incunabular examples of this genre see Pawlik, *Das Bildwerk*, pp. 45-51.

44 The copper plaques were melted down in 1762; the wooden sculpture is preserved as Paderborn, Erzbischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, inv. 1. See Pawlik, *Das Bildwerk*, pp. 290-96, cat. 35.

45 Hilde Claussen and Klaus Endemann, "Zur Restaurierung der Paderborner Imad-Madonna," *Westfalen. Hefte für Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde* 48 (1970), p. 124.

glophone scholarship).⁴⁶ In the 13th century there arose a new genre of free-standing, portably scaled, full-body figural statuettes, such as the Aachen Virgin, which were hammered, not cast, and which did not require a wooden core.⁴⁷ Dietmar Lüdke designates such statuettes “autonomous.”⁴⁸ The earliest autonomous statuettes appear to be seated Virgin and Childs, for example the c.1235-40 Minden and c.1260 Walcourt Enthroned Virgins, as well as c.1200 gilt-copper-alloy examples from Limoges. Autonomous statuettes of standing figures appear at latest by c.1240.⁴⁹ Such statuettes are technically indebted to the hammered precious-metal relief figural sculpture that populated, in increasingly plastic and independent manners, the exteriors of the large late 11th-through 13th-century reliquary shrines, for example the c.1272-98 Shrine of Gertrude of Nivelles.⁵⁰

The creation of a precious-metal statuette involved both metalworker and wood-carver.⁵¹ First, a two-dimensional design would be produced, either by a metalworker, painter, or sculptor. The design would then be rendered three-dimensionally, at full-scale, in carved wood (or clay or wax), probably by a wood-carver. The degree of finish of the wood sculpture varied based on the needs of the metalworker. The wood sculpture served neither as a core nor as a positive model. Instead, the metalworker would have hammered and finished the autonomous precious-metal figure “freely,” that is, solely by means of the anvil, hammer, ciselet, chisel, burin, punch, and related tools. Smaller components, such as hands, would be cast and attached separately. Multiple sheets of metal, usually silver, could be used for a single statuette, sometimes obviously, such as for the layering of drapery, but more often discretely, with joins and soldering hidden or made otherwise insignificant.

46 Key studies of precious-metal figural sculpture include, in addition to Lüdke, cited above in n. 3, Johann Michael Fritz, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik in Mitteleuropa* (Munich, 1982). Important English-language contributions include Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *The Art of the Goldsmith in Late Fifteenth-Century Germany: The Kimbell Virgin and Her Bishop* (Fort Worth, 2006); and Hugo van der Velden, *The Donor's Image: Gerard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold* (Turnhout, 2000).

47 See Lüdke, esp. 1:5-15 and 1:29-47.

48 Lüdke, 1:iii.

49 Lüdke, 1:5-15. The Minden Virgin was originally made for a now lost wood core. For the Minden and Walcourt Madonnas respectively see Althoff, pp. 124-26, cat. 11, and 216, cat. 78.

50 Lüdke, 1:46-47. The Nivelles shrine was largely destroyed in 1940. For literature see Althoff, pp. 219-21, cat. 80.

51 For the working methods of the figural metalworker see Lüdke, 1:118-42; and also Smith, *The Art of the Goldsmith*, pp. 25-40.

A newly designed carved-wood model was not always necessary: metalworkers could also have used preexisting sculpture in stone, wood, ivory, and other media as models. The necessity and utility of a three-dimensional model for the metalworker varied.⁵² Lüdke asserts that skilled metalworkers could have freely hammered figural statuettes from two-dimensional designs alone, and the metalworker, if suitably skilled, could have designed and executed the necessary two- and three-dimensional models himself. Repeatedly, however, there seems to be a stylistic dependence of the metalworker on the model. A single metalworker, for example Hans von Reutlingen (d. 1547), would have commissioned models from multiple sculptors, whose individual styles would then be reflected accordingly across Reutlingen's output.

Only one identified pair of precious-metal sculpture and wood model survives: a silver-gilt Virgin and Child, made, according to its inscription, by Heinrich Hufnagel of Augsburg in 1482 (nothing further is known of Hufnagel), and its c.1480 carved-wood model, attributed to Michel Erhart (d. c.1522).⁵³ Hufnagel would have commissioned Erhart to make the model.⁵⁴ Following its service in Hufnagel's workshop the wood Virgin and Child was probably used as a private *Andachtsbild*. Other wooden statuettes created as models for precious-metal statuettes may yet exist; however, their identification as such is difficult: after serving as a model for the metalworker, the wood sculpture may have been polychromed and entered into liturgical or devotional use.⁵⁵ Small-scale, freestanding, polychromed-wood figural sculpture produced as finished sculpture (any service as a model being secondary) begins to arise, on a region-by-region basis, only in the late 14th century.⁵⁶

52 For the relationship between model and finished statuette see Lüdke, 1:126-36.

53 The Erhart sculpture's polychromy is largely 20th-century. See Stefan Roller and Michael Roth, eds., *Michel Erhart und Jörg Syrlin d. Ä.: Spätgotik in Ulm* (Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 284-87, cat. 28 and 29; and also Lüdke, 1:122; and Smith, *Art of the Goldsmith*, pp. 32-34.

54 Anja Broschek, *Michel Erhart. Ein Beitrag zur schwäbischen Plastik der Spätgotik*, Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte 8 (Berlin, 1973), pp. 93-94.

55 Lüdke 1:124-26.

56 See Norbert Jopek, "Kleinbildwerke des Syrlin-Erhart-Kreises: Neue Perspektiven," in *Michel Erhart und Jörg Syrlin d. Ä.: Spätgotik in Ulm*, eds. Stefan Roller and Michael Roth (Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 154-61; and Jörg Rasmussen, *Deutsche Kleinplastik der Renaissance und des Barock*, Bilderhefte des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg 12 (Hamburg, 1975), pp. 5-13.

The Charismatic Potential of the Precious-Metal Figure

As the design and execution of precious-metal figural sculpture demonstrate, the formal, stylistic, and mimetic interests of the wood-carver or painter translated, easily and intentionally, to the metalworker. The charismatic rendering of the human figure should therefore follow as appropriate. And yet, the radiant, lustrous medium of precious metal potentially inhibits mimetic imitation. Precious metal symbolically distanced the figure from the viewer's earthly sphere, as did the gilding of polychromed-wood sculpture.⁵⁷ Visually, the metallic surface worked against mimetic verisimilitude. As Michael Baxandall phrases it, gilt surfaces "... easily become incoherent through dazzle."⁵⁸

Baxandall's judgment resonates with the fact that late medieval polychromed-wood sculpture utilized a variety of gilding techniques to manipulate the luster, hue, and overall appearance of the gilt surface. While technical considerations may have primarily driven the decision to use water gilding (*Poliment- or Glanzvergoldung*) or oil gilding (*Matt- or Ölvergoldung*), the decision to vary the color of an underlying bole or to cover a gilded surface with a layer of paint was clearly one of optical effect. In addition, glazes were sometimes applied to gilded areas, especially drapery, to soften and decrease their luster.⁵⁹ This recalls, however circuitously, the famous episode recounted by Pliny (d. 79 AD): Nero so admired a bronze sculpture by Lysippos of Alexander the Great that he ordered it gilded, which, however, compromised the "artistic charm" (*gratia artis*) of the sculpture, whereupon the gilding was eventually removed. Lysippos, per Pliny, had identified only Nature herself as his instructor.⁶⁰

Indeed, by the end of the Middle Ages the gilt surface had been cast decisively as an opponent of mimesis. One of the most significant and studied developments in 15th-century painting and sculpture is the gradual elimination, at different rates across different media and geographies, of the gilded

57 For a concise discussion of the dynamic between polychromy and gilding in late medieval sculpture see Lynn Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 81-96.

58 Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, 1980), p. 170.

59 For a succinct introduction to the gilding techniques of polychromed-wood sculpture see Eike Oellermann, "Die spätgotische Skulptur und ihre Bemalung," in *Tilman Riemenschneider, frühe Werke*, ed. Bodo Buczynski (Regensburg, 1981), pp. 275-83.

60 Discussed and translated in Raff, *Die Sprache*, p. 32. For text and translation see also Jacob Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society: The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. Henrik Rosenmeier, Odense University Classical Studies 17 (Odense, 1991), pp. 100-02.

and the metallic from the otherwise hued image. The *ars nova* of Jan van Eyck (d. 1441) and early Netherlandish oil painting in general, for example, is distinguished by the evacuation of gilding from the pictorial surface, a disappearance championed south of the Alps by Alberti (d. 1472).⁶¹ Both the mid-15th-century appearance of freestanding bronze statuettes in Italy and the c.1500 appearance of monochromed-wood sculpture in the circle of Tilman Riemenschneider (d. 1531) comprise two mimetic traditions that notably eschew gilding, although bronze statuettes were sometimes fully or partially gilt.⁶²

Certain trends in late medieval precious-metal figural sculpture itself might confirm this equation of the metallic with the non-mimetic. The most pronounced would be that of painting the flesh areas of the precious-metal figural sculpture (*Kaltbemalung*), a technique that further likened such sculptures to those in polychromed-wood and which is evidenced by the 13th century.⁶³ The 14th-century development of enamel *en ronde bosse* also colored precious-metal figural sculpture; however, its palette was more restricted and its use less widespread than that of *Kaltbemalung*, and the coloring conventions of *ronde-bosse* sculpture tended to contrast less sharply between areas of flesh and areas of drapery.⁶⁴

A silver book-box, made c.1510 in Hamburg and decorated with a high-relief figure of the Apostle John, demonstrates the mimetic strategy of *Kaltbemalung* (fig. 11.4).⁶⁵ John's scale, pose, and plasticity suggest his near independence

61 See, for example, Stephan Kemperdick and Friso Lammertse, eds., *The Road to Van Eyck* (Rotterdam, 2012), pp. 11-19.

62 For the 15th-century development of the Italian bronze statuette see Volker Krahn, ed., *Von allen Seiten schön. Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock. Wilhelm von Bode zum 150. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1995), pp. 128-229. For the surface treatment of bronze statuettes, including gilding, see Edgar Lein, *Ars Aeraria. Die Kunst des Bronzegießens und die Bedeutung von Bronze in der florentinischen Renaissance* (Mainz, 2004), pp. 51-71. For the surface treatment of Riemenschneider sculpture, including the monochromes, see Michele Marincola, "The Surfaces of Riemenschneider," in *Tilman Riemenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julien Chapuis (Washington, DC, 1999), pp. 99-116.

63 Lüdke, 1:139-40. A comprehensive study of medieval *Kaltbemalung*, no doubt hindered by post-medieval restorations and interventions, remains outstanding.

64 Many *ronde-bosse* enameled figures use the white- or cream-colored enamel of the face for areas of drapery, etc. For a review of *ronde-bosse* enamel see Renate Eikelmann, "Goldemail um 1400," in *Das Goldene Roessl. Ein Meisterwerk der Pariser Hofkunst um 1400*, ed. Reinhold Baumstark (Munich, 1995), pp. 106-30.

65 See Uwe M. Schneede, ed., *Goldgrund und Himmelslicht. Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1999), pp. 342-43, cat. 88. John's body is stuffed with relic bundles, irremovable and inaccessible; an inventory of the 36 relics, written in a 16th-century hand, is pasted onto the verso of the book-box's front cover.



FIGURE 11.4 *Book-Box for an Evangeliary from Kloster Harvesthude, Hamburg Workshop, c.1510. Silver, partial gilding, paint, 30 × 21.5 cm. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1879,320. PHOTO © MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE HAMBURG.*

from the book-box support: his head and canted nimbus exceed the upper frame, he gestures towards his chalice and looks to the viewer's right (at what the viewer does not know), and he stands not on the rectangular frame but on his own polygonal base, over the edge of which his bare foot protrudes. He is hammered silver, and the nimbus, chalice, and mantle edges have been gilded – his face and hands, however, are painted flesh tones. When empty, the book-box could have been stood as an independent image on or near an altar.

The Hamburg John's sculptor has endowed him with a dynamic lifelikeness. Any "incoherent dazzle" of John's silver drapery or the silver book-box itself is countered and anchored by the matte stability of John's painted flesh. This dramatic contrast of painted flesh and gilt surface had been a venerable staple of book and panel painting, and in certain painting traditions, for example German painting, it continued to flourish through the 15th century. The so-called *Goldene Tafel* from St. Ursula, Cologne, exploits this convention (fig. 11.5). Divine figures – saints, angels, and the central Virgin and Child – are painted in black outline on a tooled, gilt ground; however, their faces, hands, and even their bare feet are carefully finished in full polychromy. The figures, painted originally c.1430 and restored in 1844, inhabit a framework of c.1170 champlévé enamels, gilt-copper-alloy plaques, and gilt pastiglia (the latter two of uncertain date).⁶⁶ The figures' flesh tones lay conspicuous amidst the metallic radiance of the *Tafel* at large, and Anton Legner observes that the figures intentionally evoke precious-metal statuettes.⁶⁷

And yet, the overwhelming majority of silver statuettes do not employ *Kaltbemalung*. The Aachen Virgin's silver flesh and gold robes remained in many ways a desired norm. A c.1480 reliquary bust of St. Ida of Herzfeld, however, presents an interesting case of late medieval precious-metal figural sculpture echoing the "mono-media" mimetic strategies of bronze and monochromed-wood (fig. 11.6).⁶⁸ The bust is attributed to Cologne through stylistic comparison with specific examples of polychromed-wood sculpture. The bust's lower section would have originally been surrounded and covered by a base, thus mitigating the smooth, undefined form seen today. Ida intentionally rests her gaze off-axis, her eyes heavy, her eyelids, irises, and pupils carefully indicated. Her veil falls naturally and asymmetrically around her fleshy face, her wimple bunched beneath her chin. Most notably, the entire copper-alloy bust, including the skin and eyes, is gilded.

66 It is thought that the champlévé enamels originally framed repoussé figures in partially-gilt silver. The ensemble was used as an antependium by the 1287 renovation of St. Ursula's choir. The silver repoussé figures were replaced with the painted figures c.1430, to which the 1844 restoration has been judged reasonably faithful. The iconography seen today may have duplicated that of the repoussé figures, as Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen argues, or it may have replaced a central *Maiestas Domini* with the standing Apostles. See Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen, "Die Goldene Tafel aus St. Ursula im Museum Schnütgen," *Kölner Museums-Bulletin* 3 (2008), 58-73; and Anton Legner, ed., *Ornamenta Ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der Romanik* (Cologne, 1985), 2:348, cat. E113.

67 Anton Legner, *Rheinische Kunst und das Kölner Schnütgen-Museum* (Cologne, 1991), p. 188.

68 For literature see Althoff, p. 130, cat. 16; and Udo Grote and Reinhard Karrenbrock, eds., *Kirchenschätze. 1200 Jahre Bistum Münster*, 2 vols. (Münster, 2005), 2:92, cat. 1.37.

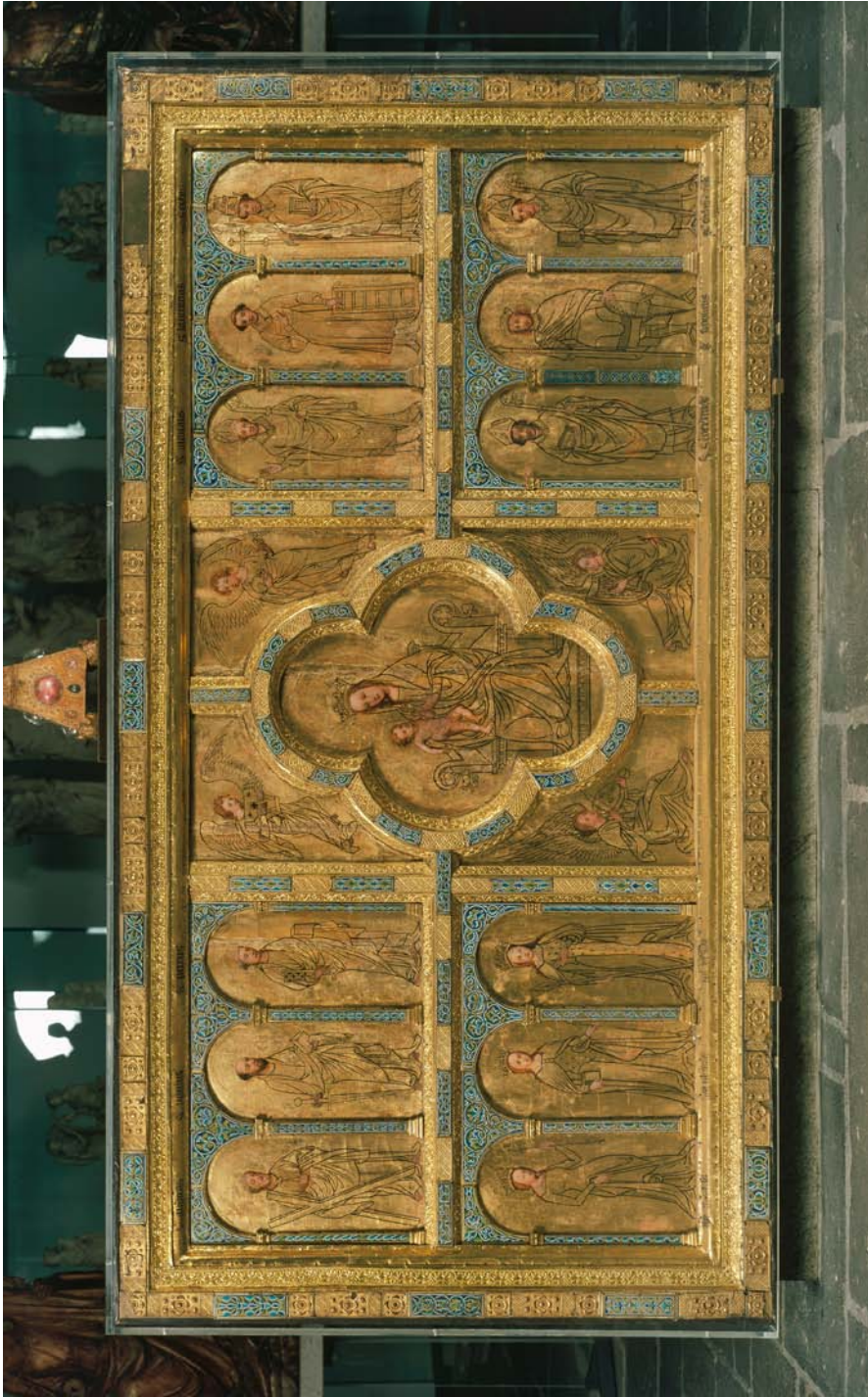


FIGURE 11.5 *Goldene Tafel (Antependium) from St. Ursula, Cologne. Wood, stucco, gilt copper-alloy, champlevé enamel, paint. Champlevé enamel: Cologne, c.1170; Painting: Cologne, c.1430, restored in 1844 by J.A. Ramboux. 114 x 218 cm. Cologne, Schnitzgen-Museum, G 564. PHOTO © RHEINISCHES BILDARCHIV KÖLN.*



FIGURE 11.6 *Reliquary Bust of St. Ida of Herzfeld, Cologne, c.1480. Gilt copper, 40 × 24 × 19 cm. Herzfeld, Katholische Pfarrkirche St. Ida.*
PHOTO © STEPHAN KUBE, GREVEN.

Between the Wissembourg Barbara, Aachen Virgin, Hamburg John, and Herzfeld Ida, a *paragone* has emerged across paint, wood, and metal, a *paragone* this essay seeks to intensify, not settle.⁶⁹ Indeed, this essay argues for a spectrum of mimetic, and also charismatic, images across paint, wood, and

69 From the abundant scholarship on the Renaissance *paragone* see Elisabeth Dalucas's study of bronze and metalworking within the *paragone* tradition. Elisabeth Dalucas, "Ars erit archetypus naturae'. Zur Ikonologie der Bronze in der Renaissance," in *Von allen Seiten*

metal. A direct equation of the lustrous metallic with the non-mimetic seems overly reductive of a sculptural genre whose art history is far from fully written.⁷⁰ Regarding charisma, the metallic figure in the Late Middle Ages remained as instrumental to generating a charismatic presence as that in polychromed-wood. This is seen most clearly when considering the use and display of these two sculptural genres.

Media Hierarchy and Interchangeability

The display of much precious-metal and polychromed-wood figural sculpture alike was carefully controlled and staged as part of the Christian liturgy. The Christian liturgy operated on a cyclical model of *velatio* and *revelatio*, a generation and temporary release, in a highly structured, anxiously protected manner, of the divine here on earth. A moment of epiphany was produced, with which the audience, if fortunate, could commune. The Christian liturgy, therefore, feverishly repeated the cycle of desire, imitation, and elevation so similar to that triggered by the charismatic image. In order to generate such a moment of divine presence and channel it to deserving communicants, a sacred space, typically anchored by an altar, had to be prepared. Such preparation entailed an increase in proper *decorum*, most visibly in the form of precious objects, textiles, and images. Throughout these conventions of decoration, the metallic surface, be it a gilt panel, silver statuette, or gold chalice, maintained its crucial instrumentality as a sign of divine grace and presence.

While the display of precious-metal figural sculpture was specific to its particular church, a few general observations can be offered.⁷¹ Precious-metal figural sculpture would have been placed near or adjacent to an altar on temporarily constructed steps, small tables, or other functional supports; within or in front of a dossal or winged retable positioned at the rear of the altar; on projections extending from the architectural superstructures (the *Gesprenge*)

schön. Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock. Wilhelm von Bode zum 150. Geburtstag, ed. Volker Krahn (Berlin, 1995), pp. 70–81.

70 Michael Cole's remarks on Italian Renaissance attitudes towards the metalworker are instructive on this point. See Michael W. Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 43–78.

71 For general remarks on the use and display of these statuettes see Lüdke 1:54–61; Fritz, *Goldschmiedekunst*, pp. 69–79; and Klaus Krüger, "Aller zierde wunder trügen die altaere'. Zur Genese und Strukturentwicklung des Flügelaltarschreins im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Entstehung und Frühgeschichte des Flügelaltarschreins*, eds. Hartmut Krohm et al. (Wiesbaden, 2001), pp. 72–75.

of especially large retables; or simply on the altar *mensa* itself as objects of emphasis.⁷² Such figural sculpture could be made mobile by being carried in processions with other reliquaries or treasury objects. It also could have been displayed within other types of liturgical furniture beyond the altar, both movable, such as *armaria* (large cupboards, often decorated), and immovable, such as mural *armaria* and shrines. Such furnishings were frequently grated for security, the precious objects obscured but visible within.

These display options applied to the other objects of the church *thesaurus*. An image of the 1415 canonization of Bridget of Sweden from a c.1464 illustrated manuscript of Ulrich von Richenthal's *Chronicle of the Council of Constance (1414-1418)*, for example, shows an abundance of these display strategies and the variety of objects thus disposed (fig. 11.7).⁷³ Bridget's precious-metal reliquary bust is held by gloved hands, her face as alert as those of the human participants; a winged retable inhabited with figural sculpture stands open at the rear of the properly vested altar; reliquary chasses and busts stand immediately in front of the retable, sharing the *mensa* with other precious-metal liturgical objects; a grilled mural tabernacle niche adjacent to the altar is flanked by polychromed-wood figures of the Virgin and John; and, to its left, a tabernacle-like shrine, its wings decorated with figural images, opens to reveal a plastic Virgin and Child standing within. A peaked cloth baldachin hangs over the altar. The drawing, summarily colored, puts the Bridget bust, altar retable, liturgical objects, the mural tabernacle's Virgin and John, and the tabernacle shrine's Virgin and Child – in all, a range of precious objects in diverse media – all in the same light ochre, grouping these decorative objects together and distinguishing them from the greens and roses of the human participants.⁷⁴

72 See, for example, a c.1465 panel by Colantonio in San Pietro Martire, Naples, cited and reproduced in Lüdke, 1:50, n. 302, and pl. 263.

73 Constance, Rosgartenmuseum, Hs. 1, fol. 33r. For the larger Richenthal tradition see esp. Ulrike Bodemann et al., eds., *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters. Bd. 3.5. Chroniken* (Munich, 2011), pp. 450-85, cat. 26B.1; and Bernd Konrad, "Die Buchmalerei in Konstanz, am westlichen und am nördlichen Bodensee von 1400 bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Buchmalerei im Bodenseeraum vom 13. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Eva Moser (Friedrichshafen, 1997), pp. 116-22 and 290-91. For the Constance manuscript in particular see Bodemann, *Katalog*, pp. 462-66, cat. 26B.1.3; and Bernd Konrad, ed., *Rosgartenmuseum Konstanz. Die Kunstwerke des Mittelalters* (Constance, 1993), pp. 96-103, cat. 2.07.

74 Despite the ochre coloring, the Virgin and John standing to the side of the grilled niche can be taken to be polychromed-wood, not precious-metal; another Richenthal manuscript, a lavishly colored c.1470 version in Karlsruhe (Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbiblio-



FIGURE 11.7 *Canonization of St. Bridget of Sweden, Ulrich Richenthal, Chronicle of the Council of Constance, 1414-1418, Constance, c.1464. Constance, Rosgartenmuseum, Hs. 1, fol. 33r. PHOTO © ROSGARTENMUSEUM KONSTANZ.*

Among these liturgical furnishings, it is the winged altarpiece that most pointedly condenses and even mechanizes these broader liturgical strategies of concealing and revealing the divine.⁷⁵ Late medieval altarpieces developed into a few standardized types; the *winged* altarpiece is almost exclusive to German-speaking areas, Scandinavia, and the Lowlands.⁷⁶ The winged altarpiece, notably, served as one of the primary arenas for the display of polychromed wood and especially precious-metal figural sculpture. Already from its c.1300 origins, the monumental winged altarpiece arranged polychromed relief sculpture, painted images, and individual objects within a purposefully hierarchical architectural framework. Figural sculpture and painted images became increasingly dominant within winged retables through the 14th and 15th centuries. Throughout the altarpiece ensemble, the gilt and the metallic were strategically contrasted with the painted.

Winged retables were governed by an aesthetic of crescendo and climax predicated upon a hierarchy of medium, preciousness, and plasticity. This aesthetic is remarkably consistent across winged altarpieces large and small, early

thek, St. Georgen 63, fol. 27r), brightly colors their garments green and blue. For the Karlsruhe manuscript see Bodemann, *Katalog*, pp. 459-62, cat. 26B.1.2.

75 Instructive discussions of the winged altarpiece in terms of liturgical *velatio* and *revelatio* include Johannes Tripps, "Studien zur Wandlung von Retabeln südlich und nördlich der Alpen," in *Zeremoniell und Raum in der frühen italienischen Malerei*, ed. Stefan Weppelmann (Petersberg, 2007), pp. 116-27; Bruno Reudenbach, "Der Altar als Bildort. Das Flügelretabel und die liturgische Inszenierung des Kirchenjahres," in *Goldgrund und Himmelslicht. Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Hamburg*, ed. Uwe W. Schneede (Hamburg, 1999), pp. 26-33; and Annegret Laabs, "Das Retabel als 'Schaufenster' zum göttlichen Heil. Ein Beitrag zur Stellung des Flügelretabels im sakralen Zeremoniell des Kirchenjahres," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 24 (1997), 71-86.

76 Winged altarpieces found in England, France, Spain, and Italy were frequently imports. The best summary of the development of the winged altarpiece is Krüger, "Zur Genese und Strukturentwicklung," pp. 69-85. For German winged altarpieces see especially Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor: Late Gothic Altarpieces in Southern Germany, Austria, and South Tirol*, trans. Russell Stockman (Los Angeles, 2006), pp. 9-39; and Norbert Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2002), esp. pp. 11-19, 255-305, and 335-76, hereafter cited as Wolf; and also Stephan Kemperdick, "Altar Panels in Northern Germany, 1180-1350," in *The Altar and Its Environment, 1150-1400*, eds. Justin E.A. Kroesen and Victor M. Schmidt, *Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages* 4 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 125-46; Hartmut Krohm et al., eds., *Entstehung und Frühgeschichte des Flügelaltarschreins* (Wiesbaden, 2001); Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 443-53; and Bernhard Decker, "Reform within the Cult Image: The German Winged Altarpiece before the Reformation," in *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance*, eds. Peter Humfrey and Martin Kemp (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 90-105. For the altarpiece more generally see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, pp. 238-58.

and late. The two-dimensional was subordinate to the three-dimensional, the painted subordinate to the gilded. A winged altarpiece might have one or two sets of wings. When closed, the retable displayed its humblest media, usually painted panels with minimal, if any, gilding. As it progressively opened, both the amount of gilding and the possibility for plastic sculpture increased. The first opening of a double-winged altarpiece, for example, might have presented figures carved in relief, or panel paintings with large expanses of gilding. The second and ultimate opening, which revealed the altarpiece's central stage-like shrine, or *corpus*, exposed the viewer to the greatest amount of gilding and the highest degree of sculptural plasticity. Although altarpieces normally would have been opened before the start of a liturgical performance as the *custos* was decorating the church interior, there exists isolated evidence for altarpieces being opened at climactic moments during the liturgy itself, such as at 15th-century Xanten.⁷⁷

A typical 14th-century winged altarpiece, the c.1350 high-altar retable at the Cistercian abbey at Marienstatt, opens to reveal three rows of architecturally elaborated niches (fig. 11.8): in the bottom arcade, protected behind tracery, originally rested relics, in the middle arcade female reliquary busts with relic cavities in their chests, and in the top arcade standing polychromed-wood sculptures of the Apostles.⁷⁸ The niches of the central vertical axis are slightly wider and protrude slightly forward. The upper niche contains a Coronation of the Virgin. The middle, grated niche probably contained a particularly venerated c.1325 female reliquary bust, or a Eucharistic monstrance.⁷⁹ The bottom arcade has recently been occupied by relic skulls, wrapped in silk and linen and placed upon pillows.⁸⁰ In the altarpiece's open state, therefore, from bottom to top and side to center, one progresses through relics, reliquary busts, iconic full-body statuettes, and finally, in the top center, narrative.

77 For public openings of the winged altarpiece see Tripps, "Studien zur Wandlung," pp. 116-19 and, on Xanten, 125-26; and Laabs, "Das Retabel als 'Schaufenster,'" pp. 77-78.

78 Two of the 12 reliquary busts date to the 1330s; the remaining are coeval with the altar. For the Marienstatt altar see Wolf, pp. 112-21; and Doris Fischer, ed., *Holz und Steine lehren Dich ... : Die Restaurierung der Klosterkirche Marienstatt*, Denkmalpflege in Rheinland-Pfalz, Forschungsberichte 9 (Worms, 2011), pp. 277-350.

79 See Fischer, *Holz und Steine*, pp. 280-83. Laabs argues for the Eucharist – see Laabs, "Das Retabel als 'Schaufenster,'" pp. 79-80.

80 While the original appearance of the bottom-arcade reliquaries cannot be conclusively determined, there do exist 13th-century examples of wrapped skulls on silk pillows, such as those at Marienfeld that were moved into the c.1430-40 high-altar retable – see Althoff, pp. 420-21, cat. 247.

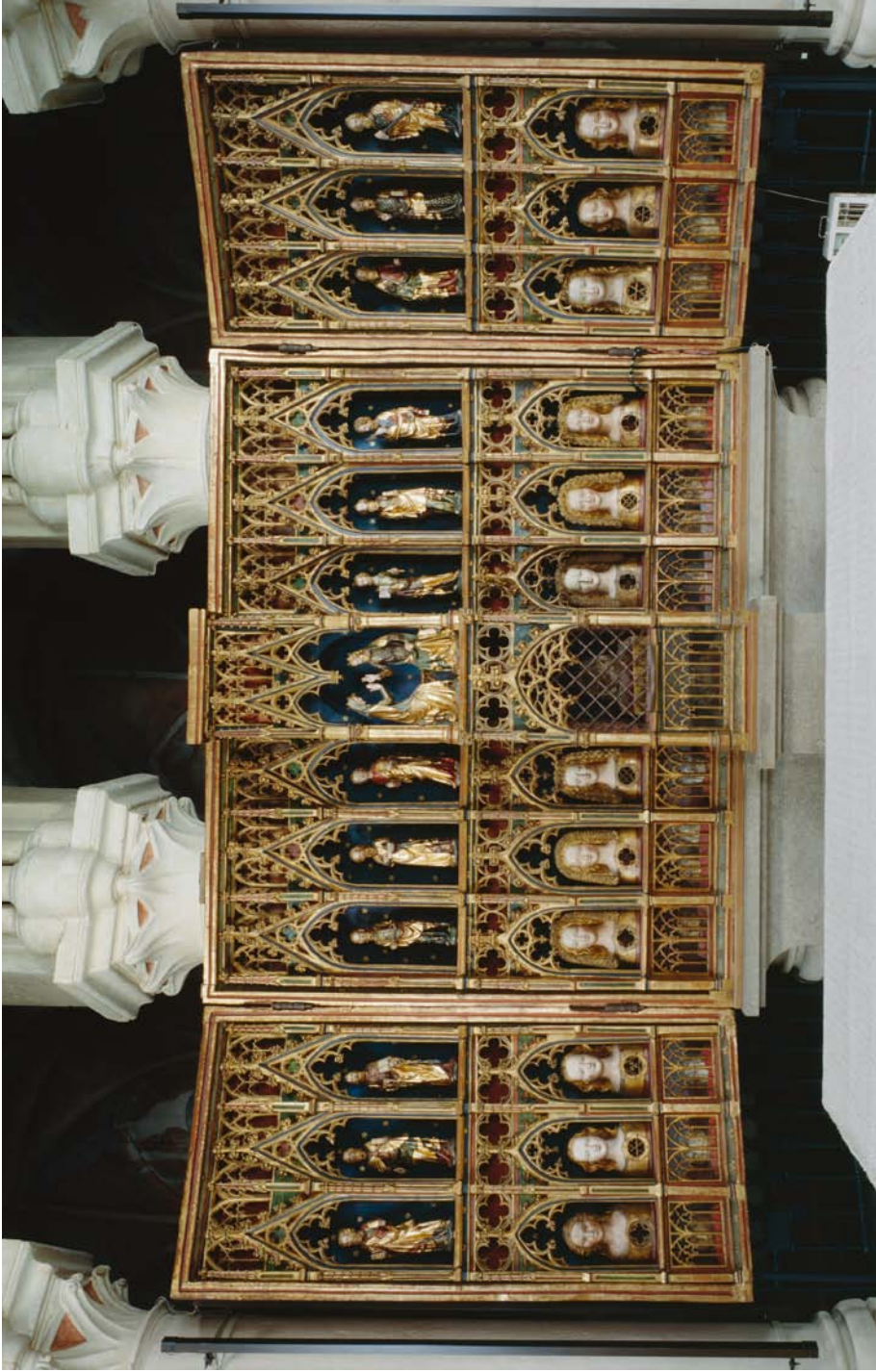


FIGURE 11.8 *Marienstatt High-Altar Retable, Cologne, c.1350. Wood, polychromy. 278 × 230 × 32 cm (open). Cistercian Abbey of Marienstatt. PHOTO © FOTO MARBURG / ART RESOURCE, NY.*

The so-called *Kleiner Dom*, made c.1360 in Cologne, models the trends of later winged altarpieces that explicitly prioritized the staging of the figural image or scene.⁸¹ When closed (fig. 11.9), the door exteriors show an Annunciation painted against a green background punctuated with yellow rosette-like stars. When opened (fig. 11.10), the Annunciation again appears, this time fully plastic and inhabiting the actual space of the *corpus*, the Virgin and Gabriel, now kneeling, joined above by God and two angels. The interior wings are painted with standing saints, narrative scenes from the Nativity cycle, and, in the upper register, music-making angels. Most dramatically, the drapery of the *corpus* figures, the rear interior wall of the *corpus*, and the interior wings, including their raised architectural moldings, have all been gilded. The gilding of the rear interior wall is tooled similarly to contemporary Cologne panel-painting, while that of the interior wings remains un-tooled and smooth. The low-relief cusped arches and architectural frames carved on the wing interiors reappear, with additional decoration, as the suspended tracery (*Schleierwerk*) hanging down from the top edge of the *corpus*. The tower-like *Gesprenge* of the *Kleiner Dom* recalls that of both monumental winged retables, such as the c.1300 high-altar retable at Doberan, and small-scale, precious-metal reliquaries, such as the c.1360-80 *Dreiturmreliquiar* in Aachen.⁸²

One could argue, however, that the most climactic points of the *Kleiner Dom corpus* are not the gilded ground and draperies, but rather the areas of painted flesh. At the core of this assemblage of tiered preciousness and plasticity, therefore, resides mimetically rendered rosy cheeks. And yet, other conventions of tiered preciousness existed. Lüdke, for example, speculates that, were a retable to have incorporated polychromed-wood statuettes, such as those at Marienstatt, precious-metal statuettes, such as the complete ensemble of 15 c.1350-90 silver-gilt statuettes preserved at Münster, could have been brought out and substituted in for their less precious, polychromed-wood counterparts on especially important occasions.⁸³

For many (all?) winged altarpieces, the more silver statuettes clustered around or, better yet, formally incorporated within the altarpiece, the better. The c.1425 double-winged high-altar retable in the Lübeck *Marienkirche*, for

81 The upper 20 cm of the tracery is a modern replacement. See Cornelia Ringer, "Der 'Kleine Dom' – ein kölnischer Schnitzaltar um 1360," in *Entstehung und Frühgeschichte des Flügelaltarschreins*, eds. Hartmut Krohm et al. (Wiesbaden, 2001), pp. 205-14; and also Roland Krischel, "Mediensynthesen in der spätmittelalterlichen Sakralkunst," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 69 (2008), 104-07.

82 Ringer, "Der 'Kleine Dom,'" p. 210.

83 Lüdke, 1:122-24. For the Münster ensemble see Althoff, pp. 442-46, cat. 270.



FIGURE 11.9

Altarpiece, so-called Kleiner Dom (closed), Cologne, c.1360. Wood with gilding and polychromy, 147.5 × 123.5 cm (open). Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, L MA 1968 a-d. On loan from the Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds, Munich. © BAYERISCHES NATIONALMUSEUM MÜNCHEN (PHOTO: WALTER HABERLAND).



FIGURE 11.10 *Altarpiece, so-called Kleiner Dom (open), Cologne, c.1360. Wood with gilding and polychromy, 147.5 × 123.5 cm (open). Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, L MA 1968 a-d. On loan from the Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds, Munich.*
 © BAYERISCHES NATIONALMUSEUM MÜNCHEN (PHOTO: WALTER HABERLAND).

example, came to contain either 92 or 93 silver statuettes, the largest perhaps 30-40 cm tall (the statuettes were meticulously inventoried in 1530 and melted down in 1533).⁸⁴ The retable's first opening revealed narrative polychromed-wood reliefs beneath baldachins. The second opening revealed the precious-metal statuettes standing within a many-niched microarchitectural framework, most recently analyzed by Jan Friedrich Richter. The 90-plus silver statuettes, however, were not all produced by the altarpiece's completion; rather, they would have been individually commissioned and donated over the next few decades. Instead of empty spaces within the retable, less precious "placeholder" statuettes would have been displayed and replaced one by one by their precious-metal peers as the latter were completed.⁸⁵

Conclusion

In medieval Christianity, the efficacy and charisma of the divine, and thereby the entire process of redemption, communion, and reunification with God, rested upon a tantalizing fleetingness and beckoning inaccessibility. As Johannes Tripps notes regarding the image of a saint:

... [what] is for us today difficult to comprehend—indeed, an apparent paradox—is that the sure sense of the presence of the saint and the protection exuded lay in the staging of his invisibility, that is, the restricting of the amount of time one exposed the saint to profane gazes.⁸⁶

84 See Jan Friedrich Richter, *Das mittelalterliche Hochaltarretabel der Lübecker Marienkirche*, Sonderdruck aus der Zeitschrift für Lübeckische Geschichte 94 (Lübeck, 2014), esp. pp. 1-14; and Uwe Albrecht, "Auf den Spuren eines verlorenen Denkmalensembles: Die spätgotische Chorausstattung der Lübecker Marienkirche," in *Kunst und Liturgie: Choranlagen des Spätmittelalters – ihre Architektur, Ausstattung und Nutzung*, ed. Anna Moraht-Fromm (Ostfildern, 2003), pp. 113-25. Richter speculates that the 90-plus silver statuettes were cast, not hammered, due to their total weight of 109 kg in the 1530 inventory – see Richter, *Das mittelalterliche Hochaltarretabel*, p. 8.

85 The "placeholders" could have included polychromed-wood sculpture, but also wood sculpture covered in part with hammered metal plaques, still a less precious object than cast precious-metal. Richter, *Das mittelalterliche Hochaltarretabel*, pp. 11-14.

86 Johannes Tripps, "Man hole einen Schmied. Funde zum Enthüllen und Verhüllen von Heiligenschreinen zwischen Spätgotik und Säkularisation," in *... das Heilige sichtbar machen. Domschätze in Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft*, ed. Ulrike Wendland, Arbeitsberichte des Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt 9 (Regensburg, 2010), p. 285.

The Christian divine usually exerted a charismatic force; the intentionally transient stagings of decorated, image-rich altars and winged altarpieces amplified this charisma. Throughout, the metallic, simultaneously as overt sign and figural medium, retained its magnificent potency.

The ideal viewer longed to be assumed into this *charis*-bathed realm. This elevation was perhaps best achieved by the ability to insert into this graceful environment an image or sign of oneself: coats of arms, donor and votive figures, inscriptions, etc., realized virtually a partaking in the charisma of the divine. The winged altarpiece rhythmically staged such opportunities of charismatic communion. This template, however, is also pictured within the Aachen Virgin itself. The statuette's donor, through his piety and largesse, has been sublimated into the Virgin's space: her base has been extended to (mostly) accommodate him, and his body partakes in her silver-gilt medium. He kneels, nobly clad in mid-14th-century armor, but bare-headed. Properly diminutive, he gazes up towards the gigantic goddess figure. While the Christ Child seems to react to his presence, the Virgin cannot be concerned to visually acknowledge him. The longing of the donor – and, by proxy, the viewer – can only be heightened.

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“I’ll make the statue move indeed”: Charismatic Motion and the Disenchanted Image in Early Modern Drama

Lynsey McCulloch

Recognising idols for what they are does not break their enchantment¹

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exoteric, *a. and n. A. adj* 2. Of philosophical doctrines, treatises, modes of speech, etc.: Designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples; communicated to outsiders, intelligible to the public.²

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In his 1977 work of comparative literature, *Disenchanted Images: A Literary Iconology*, Theodore Ziolkowski examines three literary tropes – the animated statue, the haunted portrait, and the magic mirror – and charts their historical movement from magically enchanted object to mechanized, and thereby disenchanted, device:

It is perhaps nothing less than a modern miracle if these disenchanted images still retain so much literary vigor that they can be conjured up again and again to provide a fleeting touch of magic to our disenchanted world.³

For Ziolkowski, Europe’s scientific revolution – and the ensuing Enlightenment – rationalized the mysteriously moving object of earlier tradition. The source of the object’s movement was no longer supernatural but manmade and, crucially, knowable – a knowability that compromised the object’s capac-

¹ W.H. Auden, *A Certain World: A Commonplace Book* (London, 1971).

² *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. ‘Exoteric.’ (accessed February 1, 2015).

³ Theodore Ziolkowski, *Disenchanted Images: A Literary Iconology* (Princeton, 1977), p. 257.

ity for enchanting the onlooker. But Ziolkowski's chronology of charismatic motion, one clearly tied to processes of secularization, not only underestimates the strength of modern spiritual belief and the continued use of the 'marvelous' as an artistic device but it simplifies the imaginative, even philosophical, modes of earlier periods. Taking Ziolkowski's animated statue as an example, this chapter challenges the notion – still accepted by many – that a belief in magic and an understanding of mechanics were mutually exclusive in the early modern period and suggests that the charisma of vivified statuary, far from being predicated on mystery, is actually based on comprehension.

William Shakespeare's 1611 play *The Winter's Tale* – with its celebrated Ovidian finale depicting a statue brought to life – is by no means an isolated example of animating statuary in English Renaissance literature, even if it remains the most famous. Several of the period's poets and dramatists exploited the device and the literary presence of the motive statue was matched by its appearance in real-life aristocratic spaces and religious contexts; the automaton's capacity for wonder appears, in fact, unrivalled in this era. Scholars often look to esotericism, and the mystical, for an explanation of the animated statue's charismatic aura. As Marina Warner rightly comments:

[I]t is still difficult to turn one's back on the deep hinterland behind the principle of animation: the difference between life and death depends on an *animus* or *anima* imagined to lurk within embodied personality.⁴

While acknowledging the pull of *esoteric* practice in this period, I would suggest that it is the *exoteric* aspects of the moving image – its accessibility and intelligibility within early modern culture – that ensure its particular charm. The statue's availability as an object of open discourse may not be immediately apparent, however. Animated statuary takes various forms within early modern drama and the origins of its movement are not always clear. Not only do playwrights routinely neglect to inform spectators and readers of the cause of sculptural motion – and whether it derives from a human or non-human source – but the particulars of staging this theatrical device are regularly absent from the text. This level of uncertainty is not only a feature of literary examples; in documented accounts from the period of statues brought to life, the debate over animation as a derivative of natural processes, supernatural forces, or human interference is conspicuous. But, in spite of the apparent reluctance of writers to elucidate the origins of sculptural movement, the pub-

4 Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria* (Oxford, 2006), p. 9.

lic was – I would suggest – not only prepared for the appearance of the animated statue but well-equipped to decipher its meaning.

In characterizing the Renaissance spectator not as the object of stage tricks and deceptions but as a subject capable of recognizing theatrical contrivance and interpreting it, I am not suggesting that the dramatists of the period presented audiences with a singular, or transparent, version of the animated statue but rather that they offered theatergoers choice and credited them with the ability to make that choice. By often equivocating over the source of the statue's newly acquired vitality, writers were participating in a culture-wide discussion of miraculous effects and their derivation, a discussion that crucially failed to reach a consensus. The publication of numerous treatises on the subjects of magic and mechanics – in addition to the rediscovery and translation of several ancient esoteric and engineering texts – testifies to the interest shown by readers in this area and confirms also the extent to which science and the supernatural overlap in the Renaissance period. Early modern play-texts demonstrate a similar slipperiness; although audiences were familiar with the supernatural occurrence in drama, the plays' otherwise rational bent and the material reality of their staging frequently offset this magical atmosphere. The Reformation's condemnation of idolatry and its uncovering of the fraudulent use by Catholics of mechanisms to enliven iconic statuary complicate the era's dialogue on faith and fakery but it is my contention that the churchgoer, like the theatergoer, was well-acquainted with the employment of automata and, as W.H. Auden put it much later, "[r]ecognising idols for what they are does not break their enchantment."⁵ The representation of divine incarnation on the early modern stage, via the *deus ex machina* or god from the machine, was, like the active idol of Catholic practice, simultaneously transcendent and technological; a symbol of immanence within the text, this figure nonetheless depended on stage machinery or technically challenging acting for its effect. Using Robert Greene's c.1589 comic drama *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and William Shakespeare's 1611 romance *The Winter's Tale* alongside historical examples of animated statuary, this chapter will examine the significance and materiality of moving objects and assess whether the fine balance between miracles and mechanisms sustained in the period at large is maintained also in its drama.

5 Auden, *A Certain World*.

Moving Idols in Early Modern Culture

Although the early modern public theater has a reputation for minimalism, the use of mechanisms, some of them elaborate, was well-established. Robert Greene's c.1589 theatrical comedy, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, contains the creation and destruction of Roger Bacon's talking brazen head.⁶ The popularity of magic as a subject for drama in the period suggests that tricks and devices, some involving stage machinery, were essential to theatrical practice. Although this aspect of Renaissance staging may have benefited from advances in technology and the commissioning of purpose-built theaters, mechanisms and automata were by no means novel in the dramatic output of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The mystery play tradition, perhaps not surprising given Christianity's investment in iconic statuary, had much earlier utilized properties capable of representing moving statues. Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, in their 1983 work *The Staging of Religious Drama*, quote from the stage property list of a 15th-century performance in Turin of the play of St. George: "Item: another idol in which is hidden a person who speaks."⁷ While this example may not suggest the most sophisticated of theatrical effects, it was a successful method of creating sculptural movement and comparable techniques were used at civic events and special court occasions, maximizing their exposure to the wider public. Philip Butterworth has researched illusory effects on the early English stage and offers examples of animated statuary from Queen Mary's progress into London before her coronation in 1553 and Queen Elizabeth's entry into Kenilworth Castle in 1575. According to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a Florentine pageant greeting Mary included angelic automata:

[V]erie high, on the top whereof there stood foure pictures, and in the midst of them and most highest, there stood an angell all in greene, with a trumpet in his hand: and when the trumpetter (who stood secretlie in the pageant) did sound his trumpet, the angell did put his trumpet to his mouth, as though it had beene the same that had sounded, to the great maruelling of manie ignorant persons.⁸

6 Greene's later *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (c.1590) offered the playwright another opportunity to employ a brazen head; as an extra attraction, this head is required on two separate occasions to cast forth flames.

7 Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, *The Staging of Religious Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1983), p. 112.

8 Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles* (Early English Books Online), Vol. iv.

Elizabeth's entry into Kenilworth Castle featured a similar effect, with eight-foot-high modelled trumpeters sounding the welcome and obscuring the real musicians hiding behind.⁹ Moving images of this kind were a staple feature of civic pageants, lord mayors' shows, and monarchical processions. Whether by direct observance or reputation, the public were aware of their usage and of the ingenuity that made them possible. Raphael Holinshed may deride the credulity of the ignorant majority but I would suggest that he underestimates the level of engagement with such objects demonstrated by the wider populace. Assessing the public's awareness of automata, and their understanding of the underlying technology, is problematic but recognition of the ubiquity of animated statuary should revise any notion of the moving image as a figure of hidden parts and esoteric exclusivity. In other words, the moving statue should not be used as a stick with which to beat a 'gullible' early modern public.

Even within Catholic ritual, I would suggest, the coexistence of faith and technology remained, for long periods, untroubled. In the wake of the Reformation, however, the employment of motive imagery within a Catholic context was subject to heavy criticism and scaremongering from Protestant propagandists. As Ziolkowski himself remarks, "Catholic legendry is filled with tales of statues, images, and icons (of Jesus, Mary, and the various saints) that wink, beckon, sweat, bleed, cry, sing, speak, and perform various other wonders."¹⁰ Reformers, conscious of the influence such movements and actions had on onlookers, not to mention their infinite adaptability, were unstinting in their efforts to demystify the tradition of the moving idol. John Bale, the 16th-century English churchman and writer, offers an account of St. Dunstan, a 10th-century archbishop of Canterbury, in which Dunstan exploits the figure of the animated statue to sway a council vote. He, and his supporters, first "sought out a practyse of the olde Idolatrouse prestes, which were wont to make their Idolles to speake, by the art of Necromancy, wherin the monkes were in those dayes expert." Dunstan encourages his detractors then to pray to the rood – or crucifix – on the wall of the monastery:

In the myddes of their prayer, the roode spake these wordes, or els a knaue monke behynde hym in a truncke through the wall, as Boniface ded after for the papacye of Celestyne. God forbyd (sayth he) ye shuld change this ordre taken. Ye shuld no do wele, now to alter it. Take Dun-

9 Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 101-02.

10 Ziolkowski, *Disenchanted Images*, p. 22.

stances wayes vnto ye, for they are the best. All thys worke of the deuill at al they were astayned, that knewe not therof the crafty conueyaunce.¹¹

Bale's explication of sculptural movement is one of many from the period. The most famous of these is perhaps the exposure by Protestant reformers of the Rood of Boxley – a Catholic crucifix and moving image of Christ – as a mechanically-worked trick played on the innocent visitors to a Cistercian monastery in Kent.¹² The device was exposed in a 1538 sermon by John Hilsey, bishop of Rochester, but it became infamous when included in the 1583 edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. Reginald Scot, in his *Discoverie of witchcraft*, said of the Boxley rood that it was "not inferior to the idoll of *Apollo*"¹³ and the crucifix was publicly destroyed as befitting an idolatrous and papist object. The antiquarian William Lambarde describes the active Christ figure also in his 1596 *A Perambulation of Kent*. The wooden image, reportedly via the manipulation of wires, is able to

[b]ow down and lifte up it selfe, to shake and stirre the hands and feete, to nod the head, to rolle the eies, to wag the chaps, to bende the browes, and finally to represent to the eie, both the proper motion of each member of the body, and also a lively, expresse, and significant shew of a well contented or displeased minde: byting the lippe, and gathering a frowning, froward, and disdainful face, when it would pretend offence: and shewing a most milde, amyable, and smyling cheere and countenance, when it woulde seeme to be well pleased. So that now it needed not Prometheus fire to make it a lively man, but onely the helpe of the covetous Priestes ... to deifie and make it passe for a verie God.¹⁴

11 John Bale, *The first two partes of the actes or vnchast examples* (Early English Books Online).

12 For further discussions of the Rood of Boxley and its relation to early modern attitudes towards idolatry and iconoclasm, see Marion O'Connor, "Imagine Me, Gentle Spectators': Iconomachy and *The Winter's Tale*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, eds. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford, 2003), pp. 366-67; Gareth Roberts, "An Art Lawful as Eating'? Magic in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, eds. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 126-42; Peter Marshall, "Forgery and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII," *Past and Present* 178 (February 2003), 39-73.

13 Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of witchcraft* (Early English Books Online).

14 William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (Early English Books Online).

Lambarde is in no doubt that the figure was used by avaricious monks to exploit visitors and extort money from them. Thomas Goad is equally scathing, and convinced, like Lambarde, that the public were deceived by such objects:

Are not yet men liuing, that can remember the knauerie of Priests to make the Roodes and Images of the Churches in England in the dayes of Queen Mary, to goggle with their eyes, and shake their hands: yea, with Wiers to bend the whole body, and many times to speake as they doe in Puppet playes, and all to get money, and deceiue the ignorant people?¹⁵

The identification by Goad of apparently idolatrous practice with the world of the theater is unsurprising given Puritan discomfort with superstition and stage illusion. In both cases, the spectator is vulnerable to the mimetic and persuasive qualities of impersonation. However, I would argue that those exposed to the goggle-eyed and hand-shaking idols of Catholic practice were just as much aware of the implied illusion as the theatrical spectator and that, far from being outraged at such devices, visitors were complicit in the practice.

The usefulness of mechanisms such as the Rood of Boxley to Protestant propagandists is self-evident. It is probable, in the schismatic and hysterical atmosphere of the early Reformation, that accounts of Catholic devices were fabricated in order to promote the new religious order or, alternately, distorted in order to emphasize their fraudulent and exploitative function. The routine usage of visible automata within Catholicism suggests that churchgoers were far from deluded by animated statuary but rather colluded with churchmen in the employment of moving images. Automata, such as the jacks on clocks, were a familiar feature of church architecture, and their interior design. Merriam Sherwood describes the organ apes of the French medieval cathedrals of Strasbourg and Orléans; these bearded automata “mechanically indulged in the wildest antics that amused the pious even while they prayed.”¹⁶ Sherwood attributes the popularity of these devices to the rediscovery of antique engineering works and suggests that their technical aspects were generally understood:

It is not surprising, therefore, that statues that moved, images that spoke or sang and goblets from which the wine mysteriously vanished had their

¹⁵ Thomas Goad, *The Friars Chronicle, or the true legend of priests and monkes lives* (London, 1623) (Early English Books Online).

¹⁶ Merriam Sherwood, “Magic and Mechanics in Medieval Fiction,” *Studies in Philology* XLIV, no. 4 (October 1947), 585-86.

counterpart in actual machines of the time. It is, further, but reasonable to assume that the operation of such machines was familiar to a substantial portion of the people.¹⁷

In England too, cathedral facades displayed complex automata. The clock at Wells Cathedral, for example, had a mechanical jack called Jack Blandifer, with an iron hammer in each hand for striking the time. Salisbury Cathedral, in the pre-Reformation era, contained various carved figures animated by a system of weights and demonstrating incidents from the Bible.¹⁸ The use of motive statuary in Christian education was well-established. Mary Hillier, the toy historian, describes the manufacture of automated nativity scenes in European Catholic culture; the displays included "cribs in which the figures were worked by the movement behind the scenes of sand, water, steam or quicksilver."¹⁹ Hillier also relays the employment of biblical automata during sermons, with the priest using "a foot pedal to work such models."²⁰ Add to these examples the use of stage machinery in the mystery cycles and miracle plays of Catholic tradition and it seems feasible that several so-called miracles – labeled hoaxes by Protestants – were actually neither marvels nor swindles but something in between. Spectators were complicit in the spell cast upon them by these apparently self-moving objects. This collusion need not indicate a lack of faith but simply a more transparent communication between pew and pulpit. Likewise, in the theater, there seems to be, in many cases, an understanding in place between author and audience when such devices are brought into play. The circumstances of animation do not necessarily detract from the enchantment of the effect. In fact, the circumstances of animation can constitute the enchantment.

Explicating Sculptural Movement

Beyond explicitly religious rivalries, contemporary scientific and philosophical texts also addressed esoteric practices and the self-moving device. Thomas Hill's *Natural and Artificial Conclusions*, Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of witchcraft*, William Bourne's *Inventions or Devises*, John Wilkins's *Mathematical Magic*, Thomas Campanella's *Theologia*, and John Dee's Preface to Euclid's

17 Sherwood, "Magic and Mechanics," pp. 591-92.

18 Butterworth, *Magic*, pp. 119-20.

19 Mary Hillier, *Pageant of Toys* (London, 1965), p. 46.

20 Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys: An Illustrated History* (London, 1988), p. 18.

Elementa all looked, in their different ways, to explicate magical occurrences, whether by recourse to mechanical precepts or with reference to occult processes. These authors take pains to elucidate the paranormal and communicate their findings to a wider audience. In other words, they render the esoteric exoteric and, in doing so, they look back to classical accounts of the automaton, references to animated statuary within Hermetic writings, and the creation of artificial life attempted by the medieval and Renaissance alchemists Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus.²¹ These tracts and treatises were not, of course, widely available. Publication, if attempted, was limited in its circulation and illiteracy prevented several sections of the population from accessing such information. Nevertheless, the desire in these writers to communicate knowledge and enlighten the reader is more than apparent. The numbers of such works may also be attributable to a wider controversy, the theological debate over the arts of alchemy and conjuring. John Donne, in his “Of certain ingenious Arts, and rare Inventions of former Ages,” extols the work of Albertus Magnus amongst other artists and scientists:

Albertus Magnus who once Tutor was
To that renown'd profound *Pythagoras*,
Made the Idea of a man in mould,
So vive to the Spectators to behold;
With active iron gimbals to't so meet,
That it could move the head, eyes, hands, and feet:
And which was more to be admired at,
It some words plainly could articulate.²²

Donne detects no occult aspect to Magnus's artificial creation and celebrates the production of various historical automata on the basis that “[t]hese shew what rare things may be done by Art, / Whilst God doth guide the Artists hand

21 The early modern era saw the translation of several classical engineering works, by, amongst others, the Greek authors Ctesibius, Philon, and Hero (or Heron) of Alexandria. The apparent discovery of the works of Hermes Trismegistus in the 15th century galvanized interest in esotericism and the ancient Egyptian animation of statuary; for a seminal account of Renaissance Hermeticism, see Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1982). Albertus Magnus is credited, in several sources, with the manufacture of a brazen head similar to Roger Bacon's. Cornelius Agrippa believed that artificial life could be grown from mandrake plants while Paracelsus, in his 1572 *De natura rerum*, claimed to have used the principle of spontaneous generation to create a homunculus, in the form of a miniature man, by incubating sperm in horse manure.

22 John Donne, *Cabinet of Merry Conceits* (London, 1662) (Early English Books Online).

and heart."²³ Francis Bacon, taking a slightly different approach, cites engineering and machinery as the means by which restitution for humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Eden may be achieved. His *New Atlantis*, published in the early 1620s, imagines an island utopia inhabited by motive devices:

We have divers curious clocks, and other like motions of return, and perpetual motions. We imitate also motions of living creatures, by images of men, beasts, birds, fishes, and serpents. We have also a great number of other various motions, strange for equality, fineness, and subtilty.²⁴

Bacon's reading of automata as theological compensation is implicit also in his recorded response to the sight of a delivery of antique statuary to the home of Thomas Howard, earl of Arundel: "the resurrection!"²⁵

But Donne's apparently relaxed attitude towards the motive statue and Bacon's strong belief in the mechanical sciences are not shared by all. Silvio Bedini wonders "how many among the countless number of mechanicians who worked to produce automata for whatever purpose may have secretly nurtured an ambition to go a little beyond"²⁶ and early modern observers were wise to such dangers. John Dee, discussing thaumaturgy – or miracle-working – in his Preface to the 1570 English translation of Euclid's *Elementa*, quotes from Cassiodorus, the 6th-century Roman statesman and writer, on the subject of faith and the automatous arts. Addressing his Christian God, Cassiodorus states that "[b]y the disposition of your Arte, Metals do low: Diomedes of brasse, doth blow a Trumpet loude: a brasen Serpent hisseth: byrdes made, sing swetely. Small thynges we rehearse of you, who can Imitate the heauen."²⁷ Cassiodorus interprets the imitation of life as an emulation and celebration of God but Dee was conscious of the dangerous elision between white and black magic in matters of artificial movement. Dee himself produced a theatrical device – a mechanical flying dung beetle – for a Trinity College performance of Aristophanes's *Pax* in the mid-16th century and fielded much criticism for his presumption, resulting in accusations of conjuration and passionate rebuttals from Dee: "Shall that man, be (in hugger mugger) condemned, as a Companion

23 Donne, *Cabinet of Merry Conceits*.

24 Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in *The Works*, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London, 1857), p. 164.

25 Thomas Tenison, *Baconiana* (Early English Books Online).

26 Silvio A. Bedini, "The Role of Automata in the History of Technology," *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1964), 40.

27 John Dee, introduction to *Elementa*, by Euclid (Early English Books Online).

of the Helhoundes, and a Caller, and Conjurer of wicked and damned Sprites?"²⁸ But although Dee defended his work against accusations of black magic, he was nonetheless a keen student of the occult and spent much of his scholarly life researching magic and divination. His fellow thinkers were, many of them, less sympathetic to magical pursuits despite its Neoplatonic legitimacy in some quarters. Reginald Scot's 1584 *Discoverie of witchcraft* exposed the illusions used by magicians to entertain, or trick, the public, and was subjected to criticism by James I for denying the existence of witchcraft.

Scot was one of several writers in the period committed to demystifying magical practice and superstition. John Wilkins, in his *Mathematical Magic*, takes up the challenge of Daedalus's self-moving figures: "Aristotle affirms that *Daedalus* did this by putting quick-silver into them. But this would have been too grosse a way for so excellent an artificer, it is more likely that he did it with wheels & weights."²⁹ The automata of Daedalus are mythical figures and yet Wilkins still feels it necessary to account scientifically for their movement. The use of quicksilver – or mercury – is characteristic of alchemical practices; wheels and weights are less mysterious but clearly more impressive to the skeptical author. Wilkins, alongside William Bourne and John Dee, attempts also to account for the brazen head, citing the use of wheels, plummets, springs, clockwork, and pneumatics. In Italy, the Dominican philosopher, Tommaso Campanella, was unstinting in his efforts to reclassify magical movements as mechanical motion and retain as sacred the human spirit:

This art however cannot produce marvellous effects save by means of local motions and weights and pulleys or by using a vacuum, as in pneumatic and hydraulic apparatuses, or by applying forces to the materials. But such forces and materials can never be such as to capture a human soul.³⁰

Even within practical engineering texts or 'machine books,' under no illusion as to the source of their subjects' movement, the desire to expose the mechan-

28 Dee, introduction to *Elementa*.

29 John Wilkins, *Mathematical Magic* (Early English Books Online).

30 Quoted in Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 148. Yates traces the mechanical enthusiasm of the early moderns to the wonder-working of the ancient Egyptians and the technological advances of the ancient Greeks. As Elaine Graham comments, "The rediscovery of hermetism during the European Renaissance revived the ancient fascination in tales of artificial hominoids, fuelled by the unique blend of rationalism and occultism that was characteristic of early modern science." See Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 96-97.

ical workings of motive devices is paramount. Jonathan Sawday, aligning his work on Renaissance anatomy with his subsequent study of technology, describes how these machine books – texts such as Georgius Agricola's *De re metallica*, Jacques Besson's *Livre des instruments mathematiques et mechaniques*, and Agostino Ramelli's *Le diverse et artificiose machine* – "opened up a world of interior mechanical invention which was analogous to the interior world which the magnificent Vesalian and post-Vesalian books of anatomy laid before their wealthy readers."³¹

The popularity of these revelatory works also suggests a shift in social mores and the understanding of traditional crafts, even if the texts themselves were mainly enjoyed by the affluent. As Martin Kemp remarks, the intellectualization of *technē* guaranteed that "what had previously been taken as rudely mechanical pursuits acquired a theoretical base."³² The attractions of natural philosophy, or magic, remained strong, however, and John Wilkins bemoaned the difficulty in liberating automata from the esoteric tradition:

This whole Discourse I call *Mathematicall Magick*, because the art of such Mechanicall inventions as are here chiefly insisted upon, hath been formerly so styled; and in allusion to vulgar opinion, which doth commonly attribute all such strange operations unto the power of Magick.³³

Wilkins's reference to vulgar opinion might seem elitist and his published work was certainly only available to the literate but the will to publish and the text's practical function – it works as a primer for the mechanical engineer – demands that we read it as an outward-facing work. The interface between magic and mechanics is notoriously blurred in this period and it is not my intention to distinguish between the magical as esoteric and the mechanical as exoteric. Old magic and the new science are both areas subject to mystique. My argument is rather that efforts to explicate self-moving devices, whether the explanation tends towards the natural or supernatural, hint at a desire to communicate, and to an ever wider audience.

31 Jonathan Sawday, "Forms Such as Never Were in Nature': The Renaissance Cyborg," in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 178.

32 Martin Kemp, "Wrought by No Artist's Hand': The Natural, the Artificial, the Exotic, and the Scientific in Some Artifacts from the Renaissance," in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven, 1995), p. 190.

33 Wilkins, *Mathematical Magick*.

Historians of automata have often tracked the trajectory of the self-moving device as a process of disenchantment or secularization; in other words, what was once thought of as enchanted and fetishistic becomes subject to rational explanation. Despite the untidy division between magic and mechanics in the early modern period, commentators insist that such uncertainty was the first step in the demystification process of an emergent mechanistic philosophy. Alfred Chapuis and Edmond Droz conclude – following the French theologian Jean Labadié – that there are “three quite separate stages in the history of automata; the age of Gods, the age of men, the age of machines.”³⁴ Theodore Ziolkowski charts this development also in his 1977 work, *Disenchanted Images*. The animated statues, haunted portraits, and magic mirrors of Ziolkowski’s text – all popular literary devices – have been subject to a process of secularization, robbing them of the enchantment that originally brought them to life.³⁵ Ziolkowski’s representation of a disenchanted modern society not only underestimates the strength of the contemporary imagination but it grossly simplifies earlier periods, suggesting that a belief in magic and an understanding of mechanics were mutually exclusive. Preferable as a critical methodology for understanding animated statuary is Tzvetan Todorov’s theory of the fantastic.³⁶ Todorov too imagines differing responses to incredible events, creating a trinity of the marvelous, the fantastic, and the uncanny. The marvelous has a supernatural basis, the uncanny a natural one, and the fantastic owes something to both categories. Working theoretically rather than historically, Todorov interprets these groupings synchronically. Ziolkowski, with his investment in the historical sequence, offers a diachronic reading and, I would suggest, a crude one. Todorov’s fantastic admits the possibility of a dual perspective. Early modern playwrights, masters of equivocation, provide an equally complex analysis of the miraculous occurrence.

In the final act of William Shakespeare’s 1611 tragicomedy *The Winter’s Tale*, a statue animates. Hermione, long believed dead, returns to life and does so by first imitating, and then animating, statuary. Hermione’s sculptural apotheosis within Shakespeare’s text has generated a conspicuous level of hyperbole within literary criticism, prompting G. Wilson Knight to describe it as “the most strikingly conceived, and profoundly penetrating, moment in English

34 Alfred Chapuis and Edmond Droz, *Automata: A Historical and Technological Study*, trans. Alec Reid (London, 1958), p. 387.

35 Ziolkowski, *Disenchanted Images*.

36 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY, 1975), pp. 24-40.

literature."³⁷ The enchantment at work in this transformative moment is not in doubt. However, the basis of that enchantment is often misunderstood. The audience understands that a statue of the dead queen has been produced by an Italian master. Her husband Leontes and daughter Perdita – recently reunited themselves – visit the statue and are amazed by its animation. At the point of the statue's animation, the source of its motion is apparently a mystery to the audience. The suggestion is that this mystery ensures its charisma and powerful affect on the theatrical spectator. However, I would argue that the staging of the animation in a live theater modifies its reception and meaning. The esoteric aspects of the motive statue are undercut by the performative contingencies of its staging, producing an animated statue that is far more exoteric than esoteric. Esotericism is suggestive of the closed and specialized circle, a psychologically internalized world committed to strict initiation, secrecy, exclusivity, and elitism; the circulation of knowledge in the Renaissance would seem, in many ways, to conform to these undercurrents and not to the exoteric principles of openness, externalization, and materiality. However, early modern drama's engagement with such knowledge tends not towards the esoteric but towards its opposite, rendering these often hidden subjects open, accessible, intelligible, and crucially adjustable – as evidenced by Hermione's statue.

Traditionally, scholars discussing performances of the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale* have emphasized the surprise and wonder with which contemporary spectators greet the animation. Leah Scragg's description is typical:

Consequently, at the close of the play, when Leontes, Perdita, Florizel and Polixenes visit Paulina's house to view the 'statue' of Hermione supposedly carved by Julio Romano, those outside the play world are as unprepared as those within it for the revelation that the Queen is alive, and they thus share in the responses of the dramatis personae, rather than anticipating (as in *Much Ado About Nothing* or *All's Well That Ends Well*) the moment of their enlightenment. As the statue of Hermione gradually comes to life, the members of the audience, like Leontes and his household, are gripped with a sense of wonder, crossing with them into a universe made radiant by an apprehension of the power and benevolence of the gods.³⁸

37 G. Wilson Knight, *The Sovereign Flower* (London, 1958), p. 240.

38 Leah Scragg, *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales: Recurrent Plot Motifs in Shakespearian Drama* (Harlow, 1992), p. 186.

Hermione is here an anomaly, or Shakespearean oddity, capable of surprising and hypnotizing audiences. The ubiquity of the animated statue in English Renaissance theater, well-established by the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's drama in 1611, goes unnoticed. As does the play's wider interest in the mimetic, and thereby fraudulent, qualities of art. The use of life-size statuary as a stage property without an attendant animation is rare indeed and the likelihood of an actor representing an image that then remains still almost impossible. Scragg's reading not only underestimates the play's audience in terms of its cultural awareness but it also downplays the effects of theatrical embodiment on the spectator. Audiences typically fixate on the body of the actor personating statuary, as they do on the figures of the apparently deceased on stage. Props can be equally 'distracting,' especially when movement is required from them. The animated statue, perhaps more than any other stage device, raises questions about the immersion of an audience in the world of the play.

Whether represented on stage by a player or a stage property, animated statuary is accident-prone. Mechanisms fail, makeup runs, and actors breathe. The statue's propensity for theatrical chaos is, I would suggest, significant, both in terms of its performativity – it cannot fail to draw attention to itself – and as a reminder of its substantiality. It inevitably compromises the more closed and mysterious aspects of animated statuary. Shakespeare also takes pains to 'reveal' Hermione to an audience – both as art object and living, breathing woman. He provides the statue with a genuine artist, the 16th-century Italian master Giulio Romano, and there are extended discussions of the figure's mimetic qualities: "The fixture of her eye has motion in't, / As we are mocked with art" (V.iii.67-68).³⁹ The statue's materiality, and its construction as art object, are also emphasized when Paulina – the statue's custodian – prevents Leontes from kissing the static figure:

The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
 You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
 With oily painting. (v.iii.81-83)

Paulina's protestations are, of course, false; she knows that the statue is a real woman. But her playful encouragement of Leontes's wonder serves to heighten the ambivalence of the scene, as do later explanations of Hermione's simulated death and subsequent disappearance. The statue and its animation are

39 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford, 1996). All subsequent references to this play are to this edition.

interrogated by those present, not obscured by magic and mystification. Most importantly, Shakespeare prolongs the period of Hermione's immobility before her sculptural animation. The actor is required to remain still for a significant amount of time. Given this effort and indeed the very presence of the actor who represented Hermione earlier in the play, any suggestion that the movement of statuary would have surprised audiences seems dubious. Yet scholars persist in claiming that spectators were caught unawares by moving statues, implying that the animated statue's most valuable attribute is the element of surprise. David Bergeron, who has written at length on the subject of sculptural art within Renaissance drama, insists that Leontes's first address to the statue in Shakespeare's play – "Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed / Thou art Hermione" (V.iii.24-25) – is taken at face value by audiences: "[T]he dramatic irony is not felt either on stage or in the audience."⁴⁰ Irony of this kind is surely redundant if unperceived by the spectator at the moment of its utterance. Shakespeare would not have relied on the repeat visitor or subsequent reader of the play to effectively realize his final scene. For an audience fully conscious of the underlying vitality of the static actor, the mechanics of mimicking statuary – and the practical process of bringing that statuary to life – are key elements of the theatrical experience and do nothing to lessen the power, or enchantment, of that experience. Moreover, there is clearly an element of enchantment that is compatible with a shared understanding of stagecraft and a wider appreciation of moving objects within early modern culture.

In instances where the actor's body is replaced by a mechanism or device, the audience's interest in the statue's movement – and the origins of its motion – are just as pronounced, perhaps even greater. Robert Greene's brazen head is conceivably an example of this kind, its speech facilitated by a vocal instrument or a simple act of ventriloquism. The mechanism behind its animation remains unclear but it is my suggestion that contemporary audiences would have been familiar with these theatrical logistics and conscious of the technology that made them possible. Their engagement with the animated statue's theatrical materiality – as stage property or a human performer – may also have informed their response to dramatic content and the issue of magic's relationship with the mechanistic.

40 David Bergeron, "The Restoration of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, eds. Carol McGinnis Kay and Henry E. Jacobs (Lincoln, 1978), p. 130.

Charisma, and the Brazen Head

The early modern theater, in staging charismatic motion, was influenced by both antique precedent and medieval example. The regular employment of prophetic statuary in the classical era anticipates the oracular abilities of manufactured objects such as the brazen head in the medieval period.⁴¹ One of the most famous of these disembodied heads, capable of answering any question put to them, belonged – according to legend – to Roger Bacon, the 13th-century friar and philosopher. While there is no historical proof of Bacon fashioning a brazen head, the apocryphal tale was perpetuated by a mid-16th century prose account and, more famously, by Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. The play follows the eminent Friar's effort to create a talking head, one of diverse capabilities:

I have framed out a monstrous head of brass,
That, by the enchanting forces of the devil,
Shall tell out strange and uncouth aphorisms,
And girt fair England with a wall of brass. (XI.17-20)⁴²

The process of animation, however, is thwarted. Bacon's attempt to animate the brazen head is frustrated by exhaustion; while Bacon and his fellow friar, Bungay, sleep, the head briefly stirs, makes three enigmatic pronouncements (Time is, Time was, Time is past) and is summarily destroyed by a curious hammer blow. Animated statuary, such as that demonstrated by Greene, is clearly implicated in the esotericism of the Renaissance period. The source of its motion is often mysterious, its workings arcane. A cursory glance at the drama of Greene suggests that he has no intention of opening up the worlds of ancient and medieval magic to the delectation of his audience.

Using the mid-16th century and anonymous prose life of Bacon as his source, Greene chooses not to examine the means by which Bacon's brazen head is animated. The source is, in fact, far more loquacious on the subject, narrating

41 In classical Greek and Rome, belief in the divine oracle, such as that of Apollo at Delphi, was accompanied by an acknowledgement of mechanical oracular devices, or *neurospasta*. Capable of movement and speech, they were used to deliver prophecies and judgments. See Susan Murphy, "Heron of Alexandria's *Automaton-Making*," in *History of Technology*, eds. Graham Hollister-Short and Frank A.J.L. James, Vol. 17 (London, 1996), p. 5.

42 Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, Lars Engle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (New York, 2002). All subsequent references to this play are to this edition.

in detail the creation of the head and the circumstances of its animation.⁴³ Greene, for example, omits any reference to the use of a continuous fume of "simples" applied to the head during its gestation period. His source specifies that "with a continuall fume of the six hottest Simples it should have motion, and in one month space speake."⁴⁴ A simple is a substance of one constituent ingredient. The purity of and heat from these simples would seem to aid the development of the brazen head but Greene has no apparent interest in this recipe for animation. Mention is made only of the hammering out of the brass by Belcephon, one of Bacon's indentured spirits, and of the rather vague and "enchancing forces of the devil" (X1.18). The timing of the animation is integral to its success in both accounts of Bacon's brazen creation but it is only in the prose source that this is explicated. The devil raised to assist Bacon and Bungay with their manufacture warns the friars that the head will animate after a month and that they must be present to hear its speech: "the Time of the moneth or day hee knew not: also hee told them, that if they heard it not before it had done speaking, all their labour should be lost."⁴⁵ Sources are, of course, at an author's disposal and it may have been neither desirable nor dramatically necessary for Greene to replicate on stage the information available in print. He was also under no obligation to advise his audience on the ancient methods of enlivening art. But wouldn't the stage spectacle of a statue brought to life, without any explanation of its movement, have bewildered spectators?

Literary works may, as part of their remit, privilege fantasy over reality but I would argue that the playwright's reluctance to 'tell' fulfills an entirely different function. His coyness is, paradoxically, propelled by a desire to communicate. It is a critical commonplace that Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* cautions the spectator against the hubris of magical practices – although, unlike its close dramatic counterpart, Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* – the play offers its overreaching conjurer the hope of redemption. Greene's Bacon – a far less sympathetic character than his equivalent in the source material – craves control, frustrates the romance of the central couple (Lacy and Margaret, the fair maid of Fressingfield), and his meddling in the affairs of others, via the magic mirror, results in the murders of four men. His brazen head is built to pronounce aphorisms – or concise scientific statements – but also to protect England with a wall of brass, a task that the text wastes no time in declaring futile for a nation blessed with the natural defenses of the sea:

43 Anonymous, *The famous historie of Fryer Bacon* (Edinburgh, 1905).

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

Ringed with the walls of old Oceanus,
 Whose lofty surge is like the battlements
 That compassed high-built Babel in with towers,
 Welcome, my lords, welcome, brave Western kings,
 To England's shore, whose promontory cliffs
 Show Albion is another little world. (IV.2-7)

Such magical practices are obsolete: the dynastic marriage – of Edward, Prince of Wales, and Elinor of Castile – at the end of the play heralds more for the future of England than any prophetic instrument Bacon could manufacture: “this royal marriage / Portends such bliss unto this matchless realm” (xvi.38-39). Other magical practices are simply dangerous. Like Faustus, Bacon is damaged by his art. But the potential blasphemy of conjuring is not the play's main concern. Margaret and Lacy's romantic idolatry – “Love, like a wag, straight dived into my heart, / And there did shrine the idea of yourself” (vi.79-80) – is exonerated by the play's happy ending and undermines any condemnation of other blasphemies, despite the drama's conventional close and Bacon's wholesale rejection of “necromancy” (xiii.84). The focus of criticism is not Bacon's magic per se but the secrecy and suppression associated with several aspects of it.

Greene, I would argue, targets more specifically the esoteric character of Bacon's practices. The brazen head's inability to communicate is one example of this; Bacon's public performances at court are far more successful, protecting the reputation of English philosophy against the incursion of Vandermast, the German magician. The King, like the English theatergoers observing Bacon's triumph over the foreigner, is grateful for the Friar's occult artistry:

Bacon, thou hast honored England with thy skill,
 And made fair Oxford famous by thine art;
 I will be English Henry to thyself. (ix.165-67)

But while conjuring in the diplomatic interests of the nation is celebrated, Bacon's creation of a “monstrous head” (xi.17) is critiqued. The brazen head requires protection and constant surveillance. Enconced in Bacon's cell, a secret kept from others, the audience join the hapless servant Miles in total confusion at the head's enigmatic phrases. The head's first pronouncement, “Time is” (xi.54), follows what the stage direction describes as a “*great noise.*” Several moments later, another loud noise presages the head's second statement: “Time was” (xi.66). The head's last comment, “Time is past” (xi.76), comes after a final great noise and as a mysterious hammer blow destroys it.

The stage direction describes the order of events: "*Here the Head speaks, and a lightning flasheth forth, and a hand appears that breaketh down the Head with a hammer.*" Like stock phrases learnt by rote, the lines communicate nothing so much as regret and inscrutability. The head's failure to communicate becomes, in fact, proverbial. In contemporary parlance, "brazen head" came to be understood as a euphemism for a lack of contact and communication; in John Dryden's much later play, *The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery*, a prospective lover indicts the object of his affection for playing the brazen head with him when she refuses his advances.⁴⁶ In Greene's play, we might expect the mystery associated with the brazen head to guarantee its charisma. It certainly remains an enigmatic figure. But the sense of anti-climax associated with the head, coupled with its inability to engage sufficiently with the play's other characters, interferes with any attempt to enchant an audience.

Greene also cleverly redirects Bacon's esoteric approach to conjuring, offering his audience privileged access into this necromantic environment. Bacon, aiding Edward in his attempt to woo Margaret, invites the Prince to look in his glass prospective, or magic mirror. Through it, Edward will be able to view the activities of his deputy, Lacy, in Suffolk, where he has been charged with preparing Margaret for Edward's advances. Edward views Margaret, Lacy, and Friar Bungay in the glass. He cannot hear them speaking but the audience *is* privy to their conversation. In other words, the Prince watches a dumb show while the audience is treated to surround sound. The spectator is, in fact, the better magician. Comparing himself to the Argonaut with such keen eyesight he could see through the earth – "Edward hath an eye that looks as far / As Lynceus" (VIII.3-4) – Edward fails to see his own limitations. When Lacy and Margaret kiss and Edward tries to penetrate the mirror with his sword, he is again refused access. In Greene's play, the spectator is granted primacy, suggesting not only that Bacon's art is finite but also that the visual and communicative qualities of the theater offer a better model for the exchange of information, one that privileges the open over the closed.⁴⁷

Greene's treatment of the magic mirror celebrates the accessibility of the theater as a center for entertainment and learning. His handling of the moving

46 John Dryden, *The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery* (London, 1673) (Early English Books Online).

47 Francis Berry's 1966 text, *The Shakespeare Inset*, proffers a useful means of interpreting this dumb show. Berry discusses various inset performances within dramatic texts – plays within plays, ekphrastic inserts, songs, narratives, and framing devices – arguing that insets allow spectators to see further, offering a background, or hinterland, in addition to the foregrounded material and the downstage action of the text. See *The Shakespeare Inset: Word and Picture* (London, 1966), pp. 168-69.

statue – the brazen head – is quite different but Greene does not obscure the circumstances of animation in order to perplex his audience. This is not an exercise in esotericism, although the dramatist's reluctance to explain the action of the play and the magic traditionally associated with the moving statue might suggest so. If we accept that the early modern spectator was familiar, even intimate, with the 'self-moving' object – both at the theater and in wider society – the obscurity of the brazen head simply dissolves. Greene does not need to educate his audience. They understand the choice – between human and superhuman intervention – available to them. They are also able to interpret Greene's specific silence on the matter as a subtle critique of exclusive practices, whether they be magical or mechanical. The mysteriousness of Greene's brazen head is commensurate with its prosaic lack of charisma. This version of the animated statue is disenchanting, not by virtue of any explanation of its workings (as Ziolkowski would argue), but as a direct result of its esoteric opacity. The enjoyment of sculptural motion relies upon transparency and mutual understanding, even in the context of supernatural occurrences. Charisma need not be enigmatic to be enchanting.

Conclusion

Given the complex history of the self-moving device and its equally diverse appearance on the early modern stage, it seems fair to question Theodore Ziolkowski's account of the image and its inexorable slide from a figure of magical enchantment to one of mechanical disenchantment. But critical discussions of charisma and its relationship to transparency and technology continue. Alfred Gell's rejection of purely aesthetic readings of art in favor of a definition of art as technology is germane here. Gell crucially acknowledges that the "imaginative aspect of the art and the tool-wielding aspect of the art are one and the same."⁴⁸ But he does not credit the audience with the same understanding. Instead, the tool-wielding aspects of art – its making processes – remain a mystery to the spectator: "It is the way an art object is construed as having come into the world which is the source of the power such objects have over us – their becoming rather than their being."⁴⁹ Because the technical abilities necessary to create a great work of art are beyond most viewers, they can

48 Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, eds. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford, 1992), pp. 40-63.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

only imagine its manufacture to be magical. It is this error that guarantees the enchantment of the art object and enables it to be used for political and propagandist means. It is, in Gell's own terms, "the *technology of enchantment* ... founded on the *enchantment of technology*."⁵⁰ While I welcome Gell's acknowledgement of technology as an integral feature of art-making and its charismatic effects, rather than accept his version of technical prowess within art as a means of distancing the spectator from the work and its mysterious design, I suggest that maker and spectator collaborate in the creation of charisma. Examples from religious history, civic history, scientific discourse and early modern drama all suggest that the early modern public were more cognizant of artistic technologies than Gell might concede.

Stephen Jaeger, in his 2012 *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West*, has responded to Gell's position and, as I do, pays much more attention to reception and the viewer of charismatic objects. He also challenges Gell's identification of charisma with the mysteries of technical ingenuity, present within Gell's reading of the famous prow boards of Trobriand islanders: "Technology enchants, but not as much as ghosts, whether they appear in flesh or wood."⁵¹ But, like Gell, Jaeger associates enchantment with a disguised reality; charismatic art "'conceals' reality – or at least clothes it – in brilliance; it diminishes the reasoning faculty, speaks to the imagination, and exercises an 'enthraling' effect on the reader or viewer."⁵² Charisma is necessarily antithetical to reality and the objective viewpoint:

Charisma of art accordingly operates through grandiose illusions, which will appear to those not in their spell as phony or outright deceptive. Rational, critical thought mistrusts and resists charisma.⁵³

This view is corroborated by early modern reformists; their refusal to accept the miracles performed by animated statuary and efforts to expose these tawdry illusions to the public worked against the charismatic illusions of Catholicism. But we need not position the public as victims within this propagandist tussle. Neither should they be hardened cynics, alert to the illusions on show and immune to their charms. As has been demonstrated, an audience can apply critical thought and still remain under the spell of the object. Jaeger, in

50 Ibid., p. 44.

51 C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 56.

52 Ibid., p. 2.

53 Ibid., p. 39.

describing the “indwelling forces”⁵⁴ of charismatic art, comes close to a discussion of animated statuary but these indwelling forces need not be gods or ghosts to ensure charisma; they could equally be a priest, an actor, or a mechanical device. And discovering the source of movement does not in any way diminish the charismatic effect. There is still that sense of wonder in the apparently magical movement, now coupled with the satisfaction of understanding a work of human ingenuity, in an atmosphere of exoteric discourse.

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54 Ibid., p. 4.

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